DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 346 UD 031 312

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TITLE Patterns of Chinese American Family Involvement in Young Children's Education. Final Report. Report No. 36.
INSTITUTION Boston Univ., Mass. School of Education.; Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Jul 96
CONTRACT R117Q00031
NOTE 103p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Academic Aspiration; *Acculturation; *Chinese Americans; Educational Attainment; Elementary Secondary Education; Ethnography; *Family Characteristics; *Immigrants; Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Participation; Socioeconomic Status; Urban Schools; Urban Youth; *Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Asian American Students; Boston Public Schools MA

ABSTRACT

An ethnographic study examined the attitudes of Chinese American families toward success in school and learning. The first cohort of 5 families stayed in the study for 3 years, while the second cohort of 5 families stayed for 2 years. All the first cohort children and two from the second cohort were from the same Boston (Massachusetts) school. The other children were from suburban schools. The home language was exclusively English in only three families. The families exhibited three major patterns of support for education. Pattern 1 was characteristic of families with at least one parent born and educated in the United States. These families were familiar with U.S. schools and felt themselves secure in school or career. Pattern 2 families were moderately secure and moderately acculturated, while Pattern 3 families were tenuously secure in the U.S. culture and less familiar with schools. Parents who felt less secure about their status in the United States were much more deliberate in their efforts to ensure their children's academic achievement, but less likely to participate in the schools directly. To see if these findings were applicable to a larger sample, a survey was sent to 97 Chinese American families in an urban public school; 87 questionnaires were retained for analysis. In general, findings paralleled those of the ethnographic study. Both studies indicate that the more acculturated the parents are, the more directly and actively they are involved in the schools. Eight appendixes present demographic information and survey instruments and cover letters. (Contains 8 tables, 1 appendix table, and 23 references.) (SLD)

ED 399 346

CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

PATTERNS OF CHINESE AMERICAN FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Final Report

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Published by the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning. This work has been supported by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education (R117Q00031). The opinions expressed are the authors' own and do not represent OERI psoitions or policies.

CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

The nation's schools must do more to improve the education of all children, but schools cannot do this alone. More will be accomplished if families and communities work with children, with each other, and with schools to promote successful students.

The mission of this Center is to conduct research, evaluations, policy analyses, and dissemination to produce new and useful knowledge about how families, schools, and communities influence student motivation, learning, and development. A second important goal is to improve the connections between and among these major social institutions.

Two research programs guide the Center's work: the Program on the Early Years of Childhood, covering children aged 0-10 through the elementary grades; and the Program on the Years of Early and Late Adolescence, covering youngsters aged 11-19 through the middle and high school grades.

Research on family, school, and community connections must be conducted to understand more about all children and all families, not just those who are economically and educationally advantaged or already connected to school and community resources. The Center's projects pay particular attention to the diversity of family cultures and backgrounds and to the diversity in family, school, and community practices that support families in helping children succeed across the years of childhood and adolescence. Projects also examine policies at the federal, state, and local levels that produce effective partnerships.

A third program of Institutional Activities includes a wide range of dissemination projects to extend the Center's national leadership. The Center's work will yield new information, practices, and policies to promote partnerships among families, communities, and schools to benefit children's learning.

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Abstract

This ethnographic study sought answers to these research questions: How do Chinese American families define success in school? What skills and attitudes do they link to school achievement? What beliefs and ideas do they have about what and how children should learn? How do families use time and space and interaction to support learning? How do families structure educational activities at home, in the school, and in the community? What are the rationales given for the various practices?

Ten Chinese American children were recruited for this study between 1991 and 1992. The first cohort of five families stayed for three years, while the second cohort of five families stayed for two years. All the first cohort children plus two from the second cohort were recruited from one public school in Boston. The remaining children were recruited from two different suburban public schools. All ten children in the sample were born in the United States, but the home language is exclusively English in only three families. Cantonese is the primary language used in five homes, Mandarin in one, and a mixture of Cantonese and English in one. All of the children come from intact families with two parents whose education levels range from sixth grade to doctorate. Sixteen out of the 20 parents are United States citizens. Three children have one or both parents born in the United States; the rest have parents who have immigrated to this country at various stages of their lives.

This report focuses on two significant within-group differences: 1) Familiarity and experience with American schools influence how the parents approach their children's education; and 2) Parents who feel less secure about their status (socioeconomic and/or racial) in the United States are much more deliberate in their effort to ensure their children's academic achievement.

Our research findings highlight the complexity of parental values, hopes, and behaviors among Chinese American parents. "Enjoying learning in school" and "respect for self and others" were given high rankings by the parents in our study. Many Chinese American parents today are aware of the emotional needs of their children and balance these needs with other values. Our study of ten families clearly shows this awareness.

Acknowledgments

Sau-Fong Siu, the Principal Investigator for the Ethnographic Study of Chinese American Families, conducted the majority of the interviews with parents and children. She wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Mr. Anping Shen, Ms. Cecilia Lai, and Mr. Lee Beng Chua with teacher interviews, classroom observations, and interviews with families at various times during the Project (1992-1994), and the assistance of Mr. Jay A. Feldman and Ms. Anne O'Dwyer with data entry and analysis. Mr. Feldman also wrote some sections of this report.

The following individuals helped with transcription of interviews: Ms. Joanne Gray, Mrs. Yau Ching Ng, Mr. Vitus Cheng, Mr. Gregory Lui, Ms. Yu Mui Wan, and Mrs. Susana Lee. Except for Ms. Gray, all of the above also translated the transcripts from English to Chinese. Ms. Chik Ching Law was responsible for translation of the survey instrument and cover letters.

Although, for confidentiality reasons, the real names of schools, parents, children, and teachers who participated in the study cannot be disclosed, the Principal Investigator wishes to thank the central offices of Boston Public School System and Greenland Public School System, the principals of Midtown School, Jefferson School, Wayne School, Meadow School, and Nicholson School for giving permission to conduct the ethnographic study. She also wishes to express deep appreciation to the ten children's kindergarten, first grade, and second grade teachers in the above-mentioned schools for their willingness to be interviewed and permit classroom observations. Finally, many thanks to the children and their families for their cooperative spirit, openness to discussing a variety of issues, willingness to put up with intrusion into their family life, and generosity with their time.

A survey was conducted in Spring, 1995 in Midtown School. The Principal Investigator is indebted to the teachers who distributed the questionnaires and the parents who took time to complete the questionnaires. A special tribute needs to be paid to the principal of Midtown School for his unwavering support and tremendous helpfulness throughout the duration of the project.

Finally, this report is dedicated to the loving memory of Dr. Susan McAllister Swap (1944-1995). For three years, she was Research Project Director of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning at Wheelock College.

PART I: THE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

Purpose and the Sample

Research has repeatedly demonstrated the positive connection between parent support and involvement and children's school achievement (Davies, 1990; Dornbusch & Wood, 1989; Epstein, 1987; Swap, 1993). This study is part of a larger project that studied how families of different cultural and racial backgrounds and income levels support their children's school success in the early primary grades. Middle- and low-income African American, Chinese American, Irish American, and Puerto Rican families were included in the project sample. The project was undertaken to obtain a clearer understanding of how families of different backgrounds value and support academic success. We focused on family practices and beliefs within a community context in order to deepen our understanding of the process of family and community support.

Ten Chinese American children were recruited for the ethnographic study between 1991 and 1992. The first cohort of five families, recruited in 1991 — Aaron Lam, Ivan Chan, Paul Lee, Julie Ho, and James Ma — stayed for three years, while the second cohort of five families, recruited in 1992 — Lori Kao, Megan Hung, Tim Woo, Stacey Yee, and Dennis Yuen — stayed for two years. All the first cohort children plus two (Tim Woo and Stacey Yee) from the second cohort were recruited from one public school in Boston. The remaining children were recruited from two different public schools in the suburb called Greenland (a pseudonym). At this time, all the first cohort children are eight years old and in third grade. All the second cohort children are seven years old and in second grade. (Names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.) All ten children were initially identified by their kindergarten teachers as potentially successful. According to their subsequent teachers, these children continued to do well in first grade and second grade.

All ten children in the sample were born in the United States, but the home language is exclusively English in only three families. Cantonese is the primary language used in five homes, Mandarin in one, and a mixture of Cantonese and English in one. Three children have no siblings and two are firstborn. All the children come from "intact" families with two parents. Parental education level ranges from sixth grade to doctorate. There is also a wide range of occupations among the parents, from restaurant workers to research scientist. In all but two families, both parents hold outside jobs. Because we considered it too intrusive to ask about the family's income, we used participation in free or reduced school lunch as an indicator of family income. Two families could be classified as relatively low-income. None of the families in the sample is receiving public assistance.

Sixteen out of the 20 parents are U.S. citizens. Three children in the sample have one or both parents born in the United States. The rest have parents who have immigrated to this country at various stages in their lives from China, the British Colony of Hong Kong, or the Portuguese Colony of Macao. While some parents immigrated as teenagers, others arrived as adults following marriage, with the length of their residence in the United States ranging from 6 to about 30 years. A chart prepared in July, 1993, summarizes demographic information on the ten families in the ethnographic study (Appendix A).

Since they began participating in the study, three families have relocated. One year after the start of the ethnographic study, the Lam family moved from a rental unit in a public housing project to their own condominium in the same neighborhood. Toward the end of the study, the Ma and Woo families moved to the suburbs. Two children, Paul Lee and Stacey Yee, transferred to a different school after one year in the project, although their families did not relocate. In two families, those of Ivan Chan and Stacey Yee, the mother changed jobs. No new children were born to any of the families, but the parents in one family (the Yuens) were separated toward the end of the study. None of the families withdrew from the project.

Contributions of This Study to Existing Literature

A review of the research literature on home-school partnership finds that Chinese American parent involvement in education is largely uncharted territory, ripe for exploration (Hidalgo, Bright, Siu, Swap & Epstein, 1995). First, more is known about parental involvement in the home than about parental involvement in the school or in the community. Second, almost no data exist on the effects of different degrees and types of involvement on educational achievement. Finally, more is known about the involvement of Chinese parents born overseas than about American-born Chinese parents, primarily because research access is made easier by the concentration of Chinese immigrants in Chinatowns. Little is known about parent involvement patterns of Chinese Americans who are scattered in suburban communities and whose children are not enrolled in bilingual programs.

Though small, our sample included American-born children who are in monolingual classrooms in both urban and suburban schools. Their parents were recent immigrants, long time immigrants, and American-born Chinese; some were U.S. citizens and some were not. The ten families had varying income levels as well as differing acculturation. This diverse sample afforded us a rare opportunity to gain a deep understanding of how Chinese American families approach education. The limitation of the small sample was offset by the richness of the longitudinal data obtained from family interviews and observations, held not only in the home but also in public schools, summer programs, museums, public libraries, skating rinks,

Chinese language schools, neighborhood playgrounds, parents' offices, grandparents' apartments, and neighborhood music schools. The number of contacts with families ranged from 5 to 12, with an average of eight. A total of 84 transcripts were analyzed.

This study seeks answers to these research questions: How do Chinese American families define success in school? What skills and attitudes do they link to school achievement? What beliefs and ideas do they have about what and how children should learn? How do families use time and space and interaction to support learning? How do families structure educational activities at home, in the school, and in the community? What are the rationales given for various practices?

The key findings from this ethnographic study are as follows:

- Although all parents value education, there is considerable variation in the patterns of parental involvement in the school, at home, and in the community. Similar practices may also stem from very different rationales.
- Potentially successful young children in this study share several characteristics: positive feelings about teachers and schools; having parents, grandparents, and/or siblings who play supportive roles in their schooling; early awareness of being Chinese Americans; and receiving relatively little socialization in the area of racial discrimination.
- Families of all income levels and regardless of U.S.-born or overseas-born status utilize a variety of community resources, both informal and formal, to enhance their children's ability to do well in school.
- Lack of English proficiency, unfamiliarity with the school structure, discomfort with an active parental role in the school site, and scheduling problems combine to prevent some immigrant parents from participating in schools as classroom volunteers, policy makers, and vocal attendees in parents' meetings. Outreach efforts by schools will help to mitigate some but not all of the effects of these barriers.
- Parents prepare their young children for school success according to their own idea of what is important and often without accurate information on what teachers and schools value in kindergarten to second grade children.

Not all the themes that have emerged from the analysis of three years of field data from interviews and observations can be presented in this report. Instead, we have chosen to discuss only two of the most significant observations: 1) Familiarity and experience with American schools influence how the parents approach their children's education; and 2) Parents who feel less secure about their status (socioeconomic and/or racial) in the United States are much more deliberate in their effort to ensure their children's academic achievement. It is these within-group differences on which this report will focus; these differences also emerge as hypotheses to be tested with a larger sample by the authors and by other researchers in the future.

Patterns I and III: A Study in Contrasts

Clearly, there is no one way to foster children's success in school. Our interest lies in not only how the practices differ among the group of ten parents, but also how parental beliefs, perceptions of their status, and experiences as Chinese Americans drive and shape their strategies.

The ten families exhibit three major patterns of support for education. Pattern I seems to be characteristic of those Chinese American families in which at least one parent was born in the United States and has gone through the American educational system. These parents are familiar with how schools operate in the U.S. and they perceive themselves as successful in school and/or career. Their feelings of security regarding their status in this country are relatively high. For lack of a better term, we will refer to Pattern I as "highly secure/highly acculturated insiders" and "highly secure" for short. Pattern III, "tenuously secure/limitedly acculturated outsiders" or "tenuously secure" for short, is exhibited by those families in which both parents are immigrants who completed their schooling overseas and do not perceive themselves to have achieved success or security in a socioeconomic sense. They consider themselves outsiders to mainstream society. Between these two poles lies Pattern II, which we will call "moderately secure/moderately acculturated and not quite insiders," abbreviated as "moderately secure." When parents are immigrants who received their earlier schooling overseas, but also attended school in the United States, they tend to display ambivalence in their views as well as practices, perhaps reflecting a strong desire to strike a balance between the traditional Chinese way and the mainstream American pattern of involvement with the child's education.

In keeping with a qualitative research approach, we are concerned with meaning and perception. Thus, when words such as "success" and "security" are applied to parents, we are merely referring to the parents' self-description or perceptions, and not to any objective measure or to the researcher's judgment of their socioeconomic status or psychological security.

The rest of the report will explicate the three types of families, drawing from researcher observations and using selected quotes from interviews. The families of Julie Ho, Tim Woo, and Dennis Yuen exemplify the "highly secure" pattern; the families of Aaron Lam, Ivan Chan, and Paul Lee exemplify the "tenuously secure" pattern; and the "moderately secure" pattern is represented by the families of James Ma, Stacey Yee, Megan Hung, and Lori Kao.

Because case studies comparing and contrasting "highly secure" and "tenuously secure" families have been published earlier (Siu, 1994; Siu & Feldman, 1995), this current

report will produce full case studies only on the four families fitting Pattern II, "moderately secure." But first, we will use tables to highlight the differences between Pattern I and Pattern III on a few selected dimensions: (1) General Views on Education, Schools, and Teachers, (2) Involvement in the School, and (3) Home Strategies to Support Education. Table 1 shows differences with regard to the first dimension.

Table 1: Comparison of Pattern I and Pattern III: General Views on Education, Schools, and Teachers

ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL & EDUCATION	PATTERN 1 Highly secure	Pattern III Tenuously secure
Parental role in education	Partner with school, contributes skills and talents to school, advocate for own child	Take up the slack, quietly supplement what school does, advocate for own child when necessary
Belief in efficacy of parental efforts to change the school	Medium/high	Low
Concern with school's academic program	Low/medium	Medium-high
Definition of "good" teacher	Able to foster child's social development and treat child as an individual	Strict, maintain order in classroom, give much homework
Rationale for schooling (given to child)	Enrich oneself; make friends	Achieve future economic security
Motivational strategies	Do as well as your parents; take advantage of opportunities	Do better than your parents, hard work will pay off

Pattern I and Pattern III families also show major dissimilarities with respect to their involvement in the school.

Table 2: Comparison of Pattern I and Pattern III: Involvement in the School

INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL	PATTERN I Highly secure	Pattern III Tenuously secure
Participate in decision-making bodies	More likely	Less likely
Serve as volunteer	More likely	Less likely
Initiate contact with teacher about own child	More likely	Less likely
Openly express dissatisfaction to school personnel	More likely	Less likely
Primary obstacles to more active involvement in the school	Work schedule	Work schedule Language unfamiliarity

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Although some studies have shown that Chinese immigrant parents, unfamiliar with the U.S. school system, have a tendency to stay away from parent-teacher conferences or school performances and celebrations, all three families in our sample which fall under Pattern III "tenuously secure" respond to teachers' invitations to meet about the child and try to attend as many school functions as their schedules permit. In this sense, they are not different from Pattern I parents.

In home strategies to support education, Pattern I and Pattern III families also show pronounced variations, as shown in Table 3 below. Some home strategies, however, are adopted by both Pattern I and Pattern III parents — for example, encouraging the child to read on his or her own or to read to the parents, as well as asking the child about school. Because of the lack of contrast, these common strategies are not shown in the table.

Table 3: Comparison of Pattern I and Pattern III: Home Strategies to Support Child's Education

HOME STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT EDUCATION	PATTERN I Highly secure	Pattern III Tenuously secure
Emphasize drills/practice of skills	Less likely	More likely
Read regularly to child	More likely	Less likely
Develop study habits early in child's life	Less likely	More likely
Emphasize proper behavior such as sitting still, doing what is told	Less likely	More likely
Tightly monitor homework	Less likely	More likely
Make up extra homework	Less likely	More likely
Put pressure on children to work hard and achieve academically	Less likely	More likely
Show vigilance around child's grades, scores, & "honor roll"	Less likely	More likely
Be highly protective of child	Less likely	More likely
Give freedom to child to make choices	More likely	Less likely
Choose extracurricular activities that	Are "fun" and relaxing, what child has a talent for or is interested in	Reinforce academics, develop discipline, or teach useful skills

What explanation can be offered for differential patterns of family involvement with education? A comparative study of parental involvement of three generations of Japanese Americans in the education of their children (Shoho, 1992) found that increased direct involvement was highly related to English proficiency and familiarity with the dominant culture, including the educational system. Succeeding generations were not as hampered by

socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural barriers as the first immigrant generation. Although our study of Chinese American families was not initiated to test Shoho's hypothesis, our data indicate a similar overall pattern. Those Chinese American parents who are more familiar with the American school system and who speak English fluently are more likely to be active participants in the school as volunteers or decision makers. Similarly, they are more likely to voice dissatisfaction to school personnel.

The differences in home strategies to support the child's school success may be connected to "the family's perception of their own roots as well as of American 'soil' " (Siu, 1994, p. 24). We examined the ten families in our study with respect to Wang's (1991) typology of five Chinese American identities, which are represented by five Chinese phrases, each containing the word "gen" meaning "root." In the English language, these identities roughly correspond to: the sojourner, the accommodator, the assimilator, the ethnically proud, and the uprooted.

"Highly secure" parents tend to exhibit the "ethnically proud" identity. They believe they are part of the mainstream and thus entitled to what all other Americans possess. They may or may not know much about their Chinese heritage; nonetheless, they are proud of it. If they have also experienced some measure of academic and socioeconomic success, then they would naturally feel more confident about their children's prospects. Having effectively navigated between two cultures and being secure in the sense that their children will do well, these parents have the latitude to focus on their children's social and emotional development.

In an article on affimative action, Wong (1995) argues that the assumption that all Asian American parents push their children to attend elite universities may be erroneous. He points out that " those who have been in the United States for some time, aren't pushing their kids in that direction. It's more recent immigrants [sic] parents who lean in that direction. That's because parents who have been here longer realize there are different pathways to success, whereas newer immigrants still see an elite university education as the only way to make it in this society" (p. 6). The findings from our study on Pattern I, Pattern II, and Pattern III parents can be explained in a similar way.

A major philosophical and practical difference between American and Chinese schooling is the American emphasis on the social-emotional development of children. Hence, it is understandable that parents who have experienced American schooling would be much more comfortable with this philosophy. This may result in a lessened need to engage in intensive preschool academic preparation or close monitoring of their children's school work. Such parents would not find the need to assume a highly protective stance.

In contrast, there are Pattern III parents — Chinese American immigrant parents who view their status in the United States as being precarious or at least not completely secure. Their identity fits what Wang (1992) calls "accommodator." These parents have accepted

the fact of their residing in the United States, but are not yet sure of their acceptance by mainstream society. Still trying to take root in American soil where the seed has fallen, and concerned about their children's ability to compete, they expend much more effort to help their children succeed in school. In the same vein, they attach importance to scores and grades, and matters such as choosing the "right" teacher or school, and carefully planning extracurricular activities. Giving their children a competitive edge takes on great significance in these families' lives; they are taking no chances.

We will now present interview and observation data from the ethnographic study to illustrate how Pattern I and Pattern III get played out in the lives of six families. Nine dimensions of parental beliefs and practices will be examined: 1) the meaning of and ingredients for success; 2) perception of parental role in education; 3) expectations and rationale for schooling and extracurricular activities; 4) planning and obtaining information around schooling; 5) monitoring homework and promoting literacy; 6) school involvement and parental assertiveness; 7) socialization toward functioning in a multicultural society; 8) attention to child's social-emotional development; and 9) the family in the context of the community.

1. The Meaning of and Ingredients for Success

All fathers of the three families classified as Pattern III "tenuously secure" (the Lams, the Lees, and the Chans) have not had a college education and are employed in the food industry, two as waiters in Chinese restaurants and one as a cook in a well-known chain hotel. Success to Mr. Lam means "having your head sticking out above others," a Chinese idiom roughly equivalent to the English word "outstanding." In practical terms, this means graduating from college and holding a steady, respectable job. Similarly, Mr. Lee said, "It's good to be the most outstanding." Mrs. Chan defined success as being self-reliant and financially secure. In her mind, financial security can come only with a college education and a high status occupation. Using these definitions of success, these parents do not consider themselves to be successful. In contrast, all six parents in the three Pattern I "highly secure" families have bachelor's degrees from U.S. institutions, and five also hold master's and doctoral degrees. As professionals, they consider themselves successful. For them, education is definitely a critical component of success for their children, but they also stress other personal and interpersonal qualities. For example, in the Ho family, a successful person is someone who is happy and likable, able to get along with others, and financially self-sufficient by holding a professional, practical job such as accounting and engineering. Our contrast of Pattern I with Pattern III families should not be pushed too far, however; as we have shown, these parents share similar definitions of success.

In terms of the essential ingredient for success in life, almost all "highly secure" and "tenuously secure" parents speak to the importance of hard work. Innate ability is considered necessary but insufficient. As Mrs. Yuen puts it, "...I mean that you can have some kid who is smart, they don't challenge themselves, they are not going to be as successful as those who are going to try...but if you don't try, it's a waste of your ability." To Mr. Lam, a "tenuously secure" parent, the number one condition for becoming a successful Chinese in the United States is to not only work hard, but "harder than the Americans, at least 50% harder, and to sacrifice more [than the Americans]." Thus, between Pattern I and Pattern III parents, the place of hard work is more a matter of emphasis than a matter of opposing views.

2. Perception of Parental Role in Education

Concerned about the American public school's general laxness, the Lams — a "tenuously secure" family — view their role as supplementing what the school is doing and filling in the gaps. They are clear about their responsibility — to teach Aaron the skills they believe he needs in order to compete and come out ahead. Believing that there is a proper path for Aaron to follow, the parents keep focusing Aaron's attention on this path, which they refer to as *kwai doe* or a track. Mrs. Lam's remark is typical of "tenuously secure" families: "As parents, our purpose is to guide him. The parent's responsibility is to guide him through a path that might have a greater likelihood and more opportunity for success." Her husband asserts that another parental role is to teach Aaron to be mentally tough, able to take on challenges because the world out there is one in which the principle of "survival of the fittest" prevails. These philosophies constitute the driving force behind a number of practices, such as teaching Aaron how to hold a pencil before he entered kindergarten, choosing his after-school activities carefully, signing him up for Kumon Math Workshops to sharpen his computational skills.

The parents of Ivan Chan regularly make up extra homework to supplement what is lacking in the school. Similarly, the parents of Paul Lee assume the role of home teacher because Paul is reticent about asking the teacher to explain things in class. What the Lams, the Chans, and the Lees have in common is that the parents supply a variety of equipment and materials to help ensure their children's success in school — workbooks, electronic dictionary with the capacity to pronounce the word, an electronic "learning" machine that teaches subtraction and addition, flash cards, or a special gadget to help a young child hold a pencil.

Our study found a fair degree of contrast with regard to "highly secure" parents in how they conceptualize their role in education. For example, Mrs. Ho sees these as her duty: keeping informed about the school's curriculum and operations, getting to know the teachers, monitoring her children's progress, and speaking up to ensure that her children's needs are

met. This means deep and regular involvement in the school as a classroom or library volunteer, decision-maker, and observer.

Whereas "tenuously secure" parents tend to refer to the correct path and the need to make a financial investment in education, "highly secure" parents emphasize the necessity of "being there for the children," as Mrs. Ho puts it. Another "highly secure" parent (Mrs. Yuen) sees her role as engaging in a casual conversation about school with Dennis, partly to find out what is going on in school and partly to convey an interest in him and what he does.

3. Expectations and Rationale for Schooling and Extracurricular Activities

The differences between "highly secure" parents and "tenuously secure" parents are quite pronounced when it comes to expectations for their children. Of course, all parents hope their children will attend college and none will "force" their children to go. However, "highly secure" parents seem to have fewer specific academic and career goals for their children. When asked about her expectations of Tim, Mrs. Woo, an American-born Chinese whose mother was raised in the United States, answered, "To be happy, to be well-adjusted, to get along with other people. [I have] no particular professional goals for him." She will be very open to her son going into fields other than medicine, science, and engineering. Mrs. Ho showed no concern when Julie was left off the honor roll because of excessive talking in class. She asserted that she definitely would place social skills ahead of getting excellent grades. She would be supportive of any of Julie's career goals as long as they are "practical" occupations. Mrs. Yuen, a professional woman born in the United States to immigrant parents, goes even further:

> I guess my view is that when Dennis is going through school, if he's not all A's, I won't make him feel like he screwed up, I'll just ask him, "Do you think you can make it better?" If not, as long as you try the best you can, that's fine with me... I've always told Dennis, "It's up to you...if you want to go to college, if you want to be a carpenter, that's fine too."... For me it's important that he gets along with the other kids, because I remember not always feeling like I fit in when I was growing up.... A big thing for me is just he has to get along with the kids, he has to feel like he's comfortable.

Such an attitude is in marked contrast to the attitudes expressed by the "tenuously secure" parents. The comment by Paul Lee's father is typical: "I think our expectations and goals are quite ordinary; they are the same as other Chinese parents. Attend a good school, get into college, find a steady job and earn a decent living." On another occasion, he states, "I expect him to do well in school, all A's..." His wife, while saying that she would not force Paul to go to college, concedes that she expects him to be a doctor or lawyer. The list of professions Mrs. Chan envisions for Ivan includes "doctor, engineer, computer scientist, or

researcher, depending on his interests and abilities." She talks about hopes of Ivan going to MIT or Harvard and pursuing a Ph.D. if he is able.

Noting the differences between Chinese immigrant parents and those born in the United States, Mrs. Woo, a teacher by profession, offers this observation:

> My generation, being third generation, there wasn't a big emphasis that we be mathematicians or engineers or whatever from my parents. I think that after ethnic or racial groups have been here a long time they will do whatever. The other thing is that because I came from the West Coast, there are a lot more Asians there and you see them in a lot of professions where there is not much of a stereotype if people have been there five or six generations.

For "tenuously secure" families, class rank and grades take on great significance even in the early grades. The Chans, the Lams, and to a lesser extent, the Lees, all monitor their children's report cards closely, counting the number of "1," "2," and "3" ratings. This behavior is hardly ever reported by the "highly secure" parents. Prompted by a belief that the kind of tests and the kind of grading in the early grades are arbitrary, Mr. Woo does not attach much significance to the report card grades.

Another dissimilarity found between "highly secure" and "tenuously secure" parents concerns their rationales for schooling. For the latter, schooling is primarily a tool for achieving socioeconomic success. Mr. and Mrs. Chan will use themselves as negative examples to impress upon Ivan that if he doesn't study hard and go on to college, he will be like his parents. Similarly, Mr. Lam tells his son that if he doesn't go to school, he will become one of the homeless men he sees on the street.

Contrast this with the rationale given by the other type of parents. Mrs. Woo, for example, says, "When he comes to school, he has social interaction with other kids." To Mrs. Ho, the school is valuable as a place that provides an opportunity to make and keep friends. She does not think that college education would guarantee a good job, and children should attend college not to please their parents or to obtain a meal ticket, but rather to enrich themselves as people.

The "tenuously secure" parents' utilitarian view and the "highly secure" parents' developmental view of formal schooling spill over to extracurricular activities as well. In the Lam family, for example, most of Aaron's activities are chosen with future success in mind, either augmenting the school's regular academic program (e.g., Kumon Math Workshops to hone computational skills) or providing an additional skill that could give him a competitive edge in the future (e.g., lessons in Mandarin). Piano lessons are viewed solely as a mechanism to relieve the child's stress in some way and art lessons are seen as unnecessary even though Aaron shows a strong interest in drawing. However, "tenuously secure" parents do not

always ignore their children's interests; Mrs. Lee, for instance, gives music lessons to Paul because he is interested in music.

The Hos' view of extracurricular activities, on the other hand, revolves around enjoyment. Mrs. Ho acknowledges that Julie has many interests to explore and should be allowed to do so as long as they fit both her schedule and that of her parents. In general, Julie's activities are chosen by her, not her parents. Speaking of Tim's various after-school and weekend activities (ice skating and baseball), Mr. Woo remarks:

> I think it's good healthy exercise and a chance to meet other friends.... So it's not very competitive, it's more social.... Yes, they make friends or whatever, learn sportsmanship.

We note that four of the six children attend Chinese school: Julie Ho, Aaron Lam, Paul Lee, and Tim Woo. However, the reasons given by their parents vary. For the Lees, Chinese school serves to occupy the children and get them away from TV watching. It is also a way for the children to be exposed to virtues of the Chinese culture — *jeun see chung do* — meaning respect the teacher and cherish the teachings of the sages. An additional rationale is that the children will be able to communicate with them (the parents) in Chinese because the parents "are not good in English." For the Lams, knowing Mandarin (the official Chinese language) will make Aaron more marketable in the future, given the growing trade relations between the United States and China. Like Mrs. Lee, Mrs. Woo sees Chinese school as a way to get Tim away from watching TV at home. Her husband, however, attaches value to a Chinese American's need to know some Chinese. Julie attends Chinese school primarily because she has shown an interest in it. As for the other two families, Dennis Yuen is not taking Chinese lessons because he has not shown any interest, and the Chans do not place a high priority on Ivan's learning how to read and write Chinese; he can already speak and understand the language.

4. Planning and Obtaining Information About Schools

While all parents naturally talk to their relatives and friends about issues related to their children's education, "tenuously secure" parents have to work much harder at obtaining the information they think they need, and they use the information to do really long-range educational planning. The following experience of Mrs. Chan illustrates this point.

Although she has used the official parent information center provided by the city's public school system, she relies heavily on informal networks, seeking information from other Chinese parents in Midtown School about summer camps, the teaching styles of specific teachers in the school, and how to win admission to the city's prestigious exam schools. She also consults her better-educated, non-Chinese colleagues and supervisors about matters such

as the names of private schools, what kind of computers to buy, and college entrance requirements. Considering Ivan's age, any attempt to learn about college entrance requirements seems premature, but this demonstrates the insecurity these parents feel. Aware of their disadvantage, they cannot take chances; rather they must possess all the information they can gather to make the "right" educational decision. For the Lams, information about academic programs, summer camps, and workbooks is often obtained through serendipitous encounters with other Chinese parents in the piano teacher's house, neighbors in the hallway, or even strangers in the library. Because the researcher is a college professor, the research interview is looked upon by these parents as another opportunity to obtain or verify information about education. Clearly, there is an intense purposefulness in the behavior of "tenuously secure" parents.

The picture is quite different with the "highly secure" parents. In fact, they speak very little about how they go about planning their children's schooling. They already possess much of the information that the other type of parents seek. For example, Mr. Ho himself graduated from the most prestigious exam school in the city and Mrs. Yuen attended a private school in the city when she was young. Given Mrs. Ho's active volunteer position at her children's school, she has ready access to school-related information. As a teacher herself, Mrs. Woo knows a lot about the local school system; she also knows the principal of Midtown School personally. These parents never ask the researcher for advice or to check out the accuracy of information they have heard.

5. Monitoring Homework and Promoting Literacy

All parents expect their children to do the homework assigned by the teacher, but in general, "highly secure" parents are much more relaxed than "tenuously secure" parents in their approach to homework. Mr. Woo, for example, says that "I don't usually check it but I make sure...I take their word for it if they say they have finished it." His wife says that Tim does not need any reminder about doing his homework because he is very good about doing it. She will help him with his assignments if he asks for help. One time Mrs. Woo got a call from the teacher about her oldest son's incomplete homework. Mrs. Woo's response was that he will have to learn to take the consequences. Likewise, Mrs. Ho does not see the need to establish any special routine to help Julie with her homework. None of the "highly secure" parents make up and assign extra homework to their young children on a regular basis.

Whereas Mr. Woo complains that there is too much unchallenging homework, more like "busywork" (e.g., emphasizing drills), the common complaint of the "tenuously secure" parents is that there is insufficient homework. They have no issue with the emphasis on drills; in fact, they subscribe to the axiom that practice makes perfect. For example, Mr. and Mrs.

Lee evaluate the quality of a school or a teacher by the amount of homework assigned. Assigning extra homework is done regularly and at an early age in the Lam and Chan families, and to a lesser extent in the Lee family. Paul Lee's older brother enjoys making up quizzes and exercises for him to do and then grading them.

From an early age, Aaron Lam has been getting homework assigned by his parents. Mrs. Lam says, "He was in K-1, which was only two hours a day, and every day after school his father...would give him copies of worksheets to work on, so he learned his ABC's...homework is important to develop good study habits in children, so even though the school gives no homework, I make up little addition problems for Aaron to do." Rather than taking his word for it, Mrs. Lam checks Aaron's homework carefully every day.

Likewise, Ivan Chan gets two kinds of homework: that from school and that assigned by his mother or grandmother. Both kinds of homework are checked every night when the mother returns from work. The night before a test in school, Mrs. Chan will review with Ivan the materials to be tested. Extra homework consists almost exclusively of worksheets, either copying words or solving simple math problems. Sometimes Mrs. Chan will also practice conversing in English with Ivan.

It is interesting to note that Mrs. Chan, while demanding that Ivan view homework as his responsibility, considers her own role quite significant. When Ivan's grade slipped slightly, Mrs. Chan partly blames herself:

> I can't be too harsh on him because I am partly to blame. With the reorganization at my firm, I have been too busy to check his homework on a daily basis or make him re-do shoddy work.

Going to the library or bookstore to get books, having the child read independently or asking the child to read to the parents are practiced by almost all families, but "tenuously secure" parents are less likely to read, whether in English or not, to the child. Commenting on Paul's relatively lower grades in reading as compared to math, Mrs. Lee explains, "I think we haven't spent enough time reading to and with Paul. So since getting the report card, I have done more reading." As Ivan moves up the grades, Mrs. Chan increasingly realizes the role of reading skills in academic success. In a recent interview, she informed the researcher that she not only requires Ivan to read but also to write a few sentences to show that he understands what he reads.

In the Ho family, reading is promoted by modeling — the parents and children are all avid readers. They buy boxes and boxes of books whenever there is a book sale, and they even have books in their vacation home. They believe that it is not important what the children read as long as they do. Even when the children were babies, Mr. and Mrs. Ho read

bedtime stories to them. Julie's fifth grade brother still loves to have his parents read to him now. In the Woo family, the oldest boy is assigned the task of reading to his two younger brothers. When Tim was in kindergarten, he told his mother he could read. Mrs. Woo's response illustrates the casual approach characteristic of "highly secure" parents:

> He says he knows how to read. I am not pushing it. He wants to keep up with them [older brothers].

When the researcher asked, "You never push him to read or spell or anything?" she replied, "No, unless he seems to have trouble and he doesn't seem to have trouble." She is, of course, watching her son's progress, so it is not entirely a *laissez faire* approach.

Mrs. Yuen's approach is also pressure-free. While Mrs. Yuen reads to Dennis, she is very relaxed about teaching him how to read:

> ...I tried to teach him to read this summer, but he's not really into it. You know, I haven't really pushed for it.... I figure between now and the first grade, he will be reading, so...He will learn at the school and I will help him. I don't think we've put much pressure, maybe we're not typical Asian parents.

6. School Involvement and Parental Assertiveness

None of the families can be characterized as passive and apathetic. In general, "tenuously secure" parents limit their involvement to attending parent-teacher conferences, and when possible, their children's performances. They do not serve as volunteers in school, nor do they actively participate in parents' councils. One interesting difference is that while two of the three "tenuously secure" parents take advantage of the option of expressing preference for a particular teacher, two of the three "highly secure" parents do not do so. In fact, the Woos strongly disapprove of this practice, feeling that it creates chaos and deprives the students of a chance to get to know teachers with different teaching styles and a mix of children. Mrs. Yuen sees no good reason for worrying about which teacher Dennis is going to get.

> He's going into first grade. He'll be fine.... You can hear all those negative things about the teacher, but your kid might still love the teacher. And you might hear all those wonderful things about a teacher, and your kid cannot stand the teacher. So we'll see.

In contrast, Mrs. Lam and Mrs. Chan do a lot of "research" before the end of the school year to find out which teacher is "best" for the next grade. They will then put in a request to the principal of Midtown School. Expressing a preference for a certain teacher is not an option at Paul's second school, so the Lees feel that it is a matter of luck whom Paul

will get. Unlike the other two "highly secure" parents, Mrs. Ho has no qualms about exercising her right to ask for a specific teacher for her child:

> I can understand why they [teachers] don't like it, but it's my kid and I must be guided by my self-interest. I will fight for the best things for my children even though this may step on someone else's toe.

As the only parent in the group who is not employed outside of the home, Mrs. Ho has the most active involvement in the school. In addition to being a member of the school council and other school committees, she volunteers regularly in the library, helps with fundraising, and works on the parents' newsletter. She also participates in an annual parent-teacher retreat to discuss curriculum issues. She is in school at least once a week and is a well-known figure in the school community.

Due to work schedule limitations, this type of intensive involvement in the school is not found in the other two "highly secure" families. Mrs. Yuen explains her situation like this:

> So, I've been to like maybe one or two functions in Dennis' school...But I'm not as involved as when he was in [day care center] in Boston with me...I like [the school]...I think, I wish that sometimes I had more time...but I think [my husband] has made up for it.

Mr. Yuen has volunteered to be an escort on some field trips, and also to give a talk in class on his area of expertise.

For the "tenuously secure" parents, work schedule is only part of the problem. While both Mrs. Chan and Mrs. Lam have attended parent council meetings, they do not feel they can participate fully due to the English language barrier. They can understand what is going on but would never feel confident about publicly expressing their opinions in English or assuming leadership positions. However, Mrs. Lam's part-time work does allow her to be an escort on field trips occasionally or to recruit, on one occasion, other Chinese parents by phone for an international exchange program in her daughter's school.

It should be noted, nevertheless, that when it comes to their children's well-being and academic progress, both "highly secure" and "tenuously secure" parents will speak up. On one occasion, Mrs. Woo almost took collective action to rectify a situation involving Tim's older brother:

> I had a situation with my son in a reading group and I found out as I talked to some other parents that they had a similar problem, so had it not been resolved, my husband and I would have gone in as a group and said that I had just found out that three other people had the same situation.

In the same vein, Mrs. Yuen had to call the teacher when Dennis was hit with a brick by a girl in school. It was not so much to complain as to seek clarification. When the teacher assured her that the girl was not habitually aggressive, Mrs. Yuen did not take any further action. When Aaron was in second grade, Mrs. Lam described an incident in which she was quite assertive with the teacher who had some questions about Aaron's ability to understand English:

> I went to see his teacher because she thought there might be a language barrier between Aaron and the rest of the class. I told her that was not the problem because he did not have any trouble communicating before in kindergarten and first grade. I asked her where my son's seat was; she told me he was sitting in the outer row and I told her that maybe my son was not concentrating in class because of his seat. If he had not heard her, he could not follow her directions. And I requested that she give my son a seat in the front.

As a result, Aaron's seat was changed and his behavior improved.

As for complaining about the way the school is run, we do not see a marked difference between the "highly secure" parents and the "tenuously secure" parents. Complaints are infrequent. Mr. Woo has expressed to the principal his dissatisfaction about the unchallenging homework and Mrs. Chan has expressed concern to the teacher about the unruly behavior in the classroom when a substitute teacher was present. In both cases, the problem remains unresolved. Of interest is Mr. Lee's remark that although there are a number of displeasing things about the school or a particular teacher (e.g., insufficient homework, too much freedom for the kids, and unexciting classes), he has not complained to the school personnel. "Every school has its own policy, its own curriculum, you can't expect them to change just because you aren't happy with it." Prompted perhaps by a realistic appraisal of the political clout (or lack thereof) of Chinese American parents, Mr. Lam points out:

> ...it is not that simple to change [the mainstream society]...there is not much influence. The most we can do is to choose a school, find a way to rectify the shortcomings. We can't change the school. Changes should be done by the whites, the mainstream of America. We don't have such power to change.

7. Socialization Toward Functioning in a Multicultural Society

Racial minority parents in the United States cannot be content with preparing their children just to function within the ethnic community. To be successful one needs skills with which to negotiate in the mainstream society. All the families in our study are keenly aware of this reality. In this section, we explore how "highly secure" and "tenuously secure" families approach socialization with respect to cultural identity, racism, and cross-cultural interactions.

A significant finding is that all six children are aware of their Chinese heritage and all have good friends who are non-Chinese as well as Chinese. Some of the children refer to themselves as Chinese Americans while others refer to themselves as Chinese, but always adding a qualifier that they were born in America. Let us use a dialogue between Ivan Chan and the researcher as an example:

Researcher:	If someone asks you, are you Chinese? Or are you American? How would you answer?
Ivan:	I would say I come from here [America]. I am Chinese.
Researcher:	Would you ever reply, I am not Chinese, I am American?
Ivan:	Never.

Unlike Ivan Chan, son of immigrant parents who speak only Chinese at home, Julie Ho has one parent born in the U.S. and one parent raised in the United States and English is spoken in the home. Her reply to the researcher's same question is "I am Chinese, but I am also American." Dennis Yuen, son of American-born parents, replies similarly, "I am a Chinese American." This is the result of the kind of socialization Mrs. Yuen describes:

> ...we always try to let him know that he was born in America but he's got grandparents who are Chinese.... And he knows he looks different from the kids in his class...but I don't think it really matters to him. So that's fine...I think he's always known that he is Chinese, and that we are in America, so we are Chinese American.

It is significant that all the "highly secure" parents refer to themselves as Chinese Americans but, regardless of U.S. citizenship, all the "tenuously secure" parents think of themselves as Chinese. Similarly, the "tenuously secure" parents' social circles also tend to be Chinese. This has implications for how they approach education. Realizing that their being Chinese immigrants could be a disadvantage for their children, they feel pressure to try harder, and they make a more deliberate effort to ensure that their children speak English without an accent and are comfortable around people from different backgrounds. The Chan family exemplifies this approach to education.

The Chan household is distinctively Chinese — Ivan hears and speaks the Chinese language every day, eats Chinese food, celebrates Chinese festivals, and sees Chinese newspapers and wall calendars lying around in the home. Yet, the parents have also taken great pains to ensure that from an early age Ivan was exposed to English and interacted with non-Chinese. In her seventh month of pregnancy, Mrs. Chan made the decision not to use a Chinese speaking babysitter but to enroll Ivan in a day-care center located outside Chinatown, one that serves Anglo and Hispanic children. "If I send him to a *lo-fan* (literally meaning "old foreigners" and referring usually to westerners and Caucasians) day care, he can learn their ways and have an easier time adjusting to school later on. He won't have to be in a bilingual program and start from square one," she reasons. As Ivan grows older and shows interest in

extracurricular activities, Mrs. Chan again rules out programs located in Chinatown. The reason why sending Ivan to Chinese school is not considered a priority is put forth by Mrs. Chan:

> My husband's English is problematic and mine isn't so great either. I want Ivan to learn English well. In the U.S. you have to deal with English everywhere.... Since Ivan was born here, I would rather that he has a good foundation in English...this is an American society. I would like Ivan to react more quickly in English.

Mr. Lee expresses a similar view: "This is an English speaking society. Chinese language is not that important." Like the Chans, the Lams maintain a very Chinese environment at home, but unlike the Chans, they have no reservations about using resources in Chinatown. They do, however, emphasize the need for Aaron to speak good English and to understand "the strengths and weaknesses of each race" in order to compete effectively in mainstream society.

For the Lees, assertiveness with regard to one's rights is a trait they consider essential to survival in American society. Unfortunately, neither Paul nor his brother are very assertive, according to their mother. Mrs. Lee recalls her own experience:

> When I first came here my English was not so good and I didn't know their customs. So I didn't know what to do when I was insulted. Once I knew the rules, I would fight back when I knew I was right.

Of the three "highly secure" families, the Hos probably know the most about Chinese culture, possibly because of their strong connections with a Chinatown church and the mother's fluency in Cantonese due to her being born in Hong Kong. The Hos, like the "tenuously secure" parents, teach the children what they believe to be Chinese values, such as respect for elders, respect for teachers, and taking education seriously. What marks the Hos as different, however, is their multiracial social circle and their high degree of comfort moving in mainstream society. The children's ability to speak English and exposure to people from different backgrounds are not matters to worry about. Thus, for them, no special efforts need to be made. The same is true in the Woo and Yuen families. The Woos have friends from all racial backgrounds; Dennis Yuen's godmother is Irish American and his sister's godmother is Polish American.

Neither Mr. and Mrs. Woo nor Mr. and Mrs. Yuen claim that they know a lot about Chinese culture nor do they practice Chinese customs at home now. All of them were born in the United States. (Mr. Woo does know enough Chinese writing to help his children with Chinese school homework.) As Mrs. Woo puts it:

> Neither one of us has said, "You are Chinese and you have to be this," which I understand a lot of families do, but we have never said this to the kids. You do it because we ask you to do it, not because you are Chinese. That doesn't make any difference, you are a human being period.

Mrs. Woo places a heavy emphasis on having friends who are not Chinese, as can be seen from the following quote:

> Just as long as he has friends it doesn't matter [what ethnicity they are] and he gets along with other kids. That's important. All my kids have a mixture of friends.... I have friends who are Puerto Rican and who are Black and their kids come over and they get along with my kids.... They are aware that people are different. And I do mention to them and I like them to know because language represents culture, food represents culture and that is why people are different and that we should recognize those differences.... I haven't made a big deal about our being Chinese. I don't think my parents did.... I want the kid to be aware of where he did come from or the family.... Most of my college friends are Asian Americans, second and third generation Chinese or Japanese. In my husband's family — my relatives — we have people who are married to Jewish, to Irish, to German, to Polish and they are happy. I have heard from a lot of first generation parents who say, "Well if you stay in Chinatown this will never happen." But this is not true. If you keep the kid around the community then they won't make friends with other kids, but what happens when people go to work. They go to college, they go to work — of course, there will be other kids around. People think you send kids to Chinese school so they will meet other Chinese kids and they will have Chinese friends but at the same time I think they need to have other friends too. Because if you have friends who are all the same you would probably find it strange when you have Caucasian friends.

The following incident that took place in the Woo household speaks to Mrs. Woo's openness toward interracial marriage for her own children:

> One day my kids were talking about getting married and my second son said there aren't any Chinese girls around that he likes, and my older son said, "You don't have to marry Chinese." I said, "You can do whatever you want — don't you know this is a free country?"

Although interracial marriages for their children are tolerated by "tenuously secure" parents, they tend to be viewed as "second best" although probably unavoidable because the children were born here. This is not quite the same as Mrs. Yuen's view that having a greater racial choice of mates is a positive thing:

> Well, I think, whoever he brings home, as long as I know he cares for her, I don't care what race she is of.... So I hope Dennis will have a greater racial choice. I want Dennis to come home with someone smart that will challenge him, or that he can treat her as an equal. And I don't know, he might want someone who is a total bimbo. But if that does kind of make Dennis happy, that's fine.

The issue of racial discrimination against and stereotyping of the Chinese is one that both "highly secure" and "tenuously secure" parents have either experienced personally or believe is alive and well. They recount incidents of being the targets of racial slurs and jokes in public places, being stereotyped as not knowing any English when shopping, being used as tokens in mainstream organizations, being teased in school, or facing the "glass ceiling" in the workplace. Nevertheless, none of the parents has made this issue a centerpiece in their childrearing. In fact, there seems to be a strong tendency to avoid discussing these issues with their young children. Mrs. Lee's comments are quite typical:

> It's hard to be completely integrated. Somehow people tend to get together with the same ethnic groups.... I don't think there will be a big problem. But if you want to climb to an upper level of society, there will be a problem of ethnicity.... Telling my kids about racism now may frighten them. When they encounter the experience, they would know how it feels.

In the Chan and Lam families, without mentioning racism explicitly, the parents have nevertheless suggested indirectly that the child has to work harder than others because of the child's being Chinese. The only example we can find of a parent explicitly discussing racism with the child is from an interview with Mrs. Yuen:

> ...because one time we were talking about the race riots in L.A. and he's like, "Well, why are they doing it?" And I explained about Rodney King, you know, the kind of stuff a six-year-old can understand. And he says, "Well, what's the difference? It's just a different tan." And I said, "Well, that's how I wish everybody would look at, that to be black is to be a little darker." It's just that there's a lot of racism still out there in America.

Like other parents of color, Chinese American parents, whether born here or not, are confronted with a formidable task: to "prepare their children to be successfully bicultural" but also "to help children learn to negotiate instances of racism without losing motivation or self-esteem" (Swap, 1993, p. 119). The parents in our sample are probably fearful that too early an introduction to the reality of racism may serve to discourage their children. Perhaps there is also a genuine belief that despite race-related obstacles, opportunities do exist in this country for Chinese Americans to move ahead. These speculations regarding the rationale of racial socialization practices can be considered hypotheses to be tested in future studies of Chinese American families and even of families from other racial/ethnic backgrounds.

8. Attention to Child's Social-Emotional Development

With regard to the childrearing philosophies of "highly secure" and "tenuously secure" parents, striking differences were discovered — differences that can be accounted for at least partially by the different degrees of acculturation. However, in the following comparison, we

must emphasize that we are not suggesting that some parents ignore the social-emotional development of children. On the contrary, there is plenty of evidence that all parents in our sample are mindful of their children's psychological well-being and social needs. The following examples, drawn from interviews with "tenuously secure" parents, illustrate this point. Mrs. Lee, who believes that children do need to be pushed, qualifies her statement:

> Push, but not overdone. It's not good to give them pressure. You can read from the [Chinese] newspapers that children kill themselves because they got bad grades. It's a loss. On the other hand, if we don't push them, they would become loose. The pressure from parents would become a big burden to the kid.

On another occasion, she says when talking about her children's watching television, "Your children should be under your control. But, on the other hand, if you push too hard, they wouldn't have fun doing that." It is interesting to note that Mrs. Lee reads the magazine *Better Homes and Gardens* for articles on child development, not for ideas on decorating. Her husband also criticizes the education system in Hong Kong for creating too much pressure on children.

Mrs. Chan sees the danger of over-programming children:

> Children have their limits; you can't push them beyond the limits. You shouldn't over-program them with activities. If a kindergarten child or even first grade child has weekend lessons in piano, art, and the Chinese language, it is too much. The child can't absorb it all.

Thus, it is not a dichotomy or an either-or situation; it is the relative weight given to social-emotional development in the two different types of families that we wish to underscore.

Earlier in this report, we mentioned how success is defined and what kinds of expectations are held for the children in the two types of families. "Highly secure" parents give much more weight to their children's being happy and having friends. We will use quotes from interviews with Mrs. Yuen and Mr. and Mrs. Lam to illustrate the differences in their views toward pressure on the child, expression of feelings, and freedom to make choices.

Mrs. Yuen shows a great awareness of stages of child development and a willingness to "go with the flow." She does not set herself up to be an authority figure. One comment she makes is particularly telling, "And he's a typical six-year-old, and sometimes he gets bratty and sometimes his parents get bratty on him." The child must be allowed to express himself:

> If they know you were willing to listen to whatever they say, you might not agree with them, you might have final say because you are the parents. But you let them say what is on their mind, it gives them a chance to express themselves.

She always takes time to explain matters, such as sibling rivalry, to Dennis; it is important to her that Dennis "feels comfortable" and to let her know how he feels. She is constantly tuning into Dennis' readiness for certain activities, be it reading, swimming, or Chinese lessons. She would never force him to learn something ahead of "his own time frame." Although Dennis, at age six, is writing some of his numbers backwards, Mrs. Yuen is not a bit worried:

> And the teacher says that's normal, so when he does his numbers when we're practicing them and he does them backwards, I don't like to pressure him to do them the right way, 'cause I figure eventually he'll get it right.

Mrs. Yuen attributes her relaxed philosophy and practice to a reaction to her own upbringing. As a child of immigrant parents, she experienced a certain amount of pressure to attend private school, to get excellent grades, and to learn piano, skating, "everything." Interestingly, her parents exemplified the Pattern III "tenuously secure" parents in our typology.

Contrast this with Mr. and Mrs. Lam, who think they know what is best for their children. Mrs. Lam asserts:

> I think young children just like to play. They won't initiate studying on their own. I think they need to be at least 15 before they can responsibly choose what they like. Young children do not have the ability to analyze what they need, so you'll have to push them.

Acknowledging that the real world is full of pressure, Mr. Lam remarks:

> As you want him to be a leader, training must start at a young age throughout his period of growth. Let him live under pressure, so that he can get used to it.

The solution lies not so much in removing all pressure as in providing an outlet through music or other means. As Aaron becomes older, he begins to talk more about his feelings and, at times, the Lams appear confused about how to respond. They seem to see the expression of feelings, including anger against his parents, as a sign of being Americanized. "Lo-fans (Westerners) seem to express their feelings directly. Whether it's good or bad, I can't say," Mrs. Lam ponders.

Obedience is highly valued in the Lam family. Contradicting a parent is unacceptable; "In China, you dare not say it is 'two' if your parents have declared it is 'one'," says Mrs. Lam. Significantly, the term "obedience" did not come up even once in interviews with Mr. Yuen or Mrs. Yuen. The Hos' position is not quite as extreme. They do see the child's obedience in the classroom as essential, and at the same time, they put a limit on deference

to authority figures. Mrs. Ho believes that Julie should not blindly bow to authority, but must be an independent thinker. In her thinking, a distinction needs to be made between "obedience" and "submission," and she is proud that neither of her children is intimidated by adults.

In summary, conversations with "highly secure" parents regarding their children's social-emotional development are laced with comments about the child's interests, having fun, enjoying activities with friends, and feeling good about herself or himself. Little reference is made to the child's homework and grades unless a question about this is directed to the parents. On the other hand, with "tenuously secure" parents, it is just the opposite.

9. The Family in the Context of the Community

The community can be conceptualized in many ways: as a sociability arena, an interpersonal influence center, a mutual aid system, an organizational base, and a reference group (Warren & Warren, 1977). Communities are an important source of support and resources for families. Extended family, friends, cultural groups, and geographic communities can provide information about activities for children and parents alike. Families vary in the extent of their identification with a certain community and in the number of communities they belong to. In turn, each family's views and practices on education and childrearing are, to varying degrees, subject to the influence of their reference groups — whom they define as their community.

The "tenuously secure" parents, whether they live in Chinatown or not, have a sense of belonging when it comes to Chinatown — a community in which they feel comfortable. With the exception of the Lams, who previously lived in Chinatown and currently live in a neighborhood right on Chinatown's border, the other two sets of parents do not see their immediate neighborhood as "their community." Both the Chans and Lees have previously lived in Chinatown. Even though the Chans make a point about using resources outside of Chinatown for Ivan, the parents and the grandmother still shop, eat, and get their newspapers in Chinatown. The Chans also belong to a circle of friends who were from Mr. Chan's native village — Chaozhou, China.

The Yuens are the only one of the three "highly secure" families that has no ties to Chinatown. They regard the neighborhood school and the day-care program of the younger child as their communities. Chinatown is not mentioned even as a regular place in which to shop or eat. Interestingly, Mrs. Yuen also sees the company for which she works as her community because she spends so much time there.

The Hos and Woos, on the other hand, have links to Chinatown as well as to their own neighborhoods. Mrs. Ho comments: "I know a lot about Chinatown, but I am not of Chinatown." Although the Hos now live in another part of Boston, they spent their childhood and adolescence in Chinatown. They maintain a strong connection to Chinatown through church attendance, relatives who live or work in Chinatown, and active participation on the parents' council of the Midtown School, which deals with community issues as well as curriculum ones. At the same time, they belong to the neighborhood residential association and enroll their children in programs and classes all over the city as well as outside of Boston.

The Woos are longtime residents in a neighborhood adjacent to Chinatown. They use a combination of resources in that neighborhood and programs in Chinatown.

A Summary of Contrasts

We have presented some sharp contrasts between the Pattern I "highly secure" and the Pattern III "tenuously secure" parents in terms of their familiarity with U.S. schools, their perceived success, their expectations, and their parenting styles. A favorite phrase of one of the "highly secure" parents — Mrs. Yuen — is "so, we'll see." This phrase symbolizes the generally relaxed, flexible, and assured way that these parents look at their children, their schooling, and their future. The "tenuously secure" parents are much more uncertain, cautious, and "driven." The themes in their conversations are competition, struggle, preparation, planning, discipline, and control. All the sacrifice and effort they have made still do not seem enough to alleviate their anxiety, as seen in this quote from an interview with Mrs. Chan:

> Professor Siu, do you think I have been doing the right thing for Ivan? What other things should I be doing?... If you see something I am doing that is inadequate or on the wrong track, I really want to know. For me, it is like groping in the dark since I was not educated here...

When asked about his major worry, Mr. Lam's answer, "Another anti-Asian movement, which could happen to our children or their children," captures well the insecurity of many immigrant parents. (The anti-Chinese movement that swept the country in the 1870's culminated in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.)

Furthermore, interviews with the children in these six families reveal that their parents have been successful in conveying their expectations and values. For instance, when asked what she can do to make her parents happy, Julie Ho answers, "Keeping my room neat will make Mommy happy; passing the swimming test to qualify for sailing lessons will make Daddy happy." Ivan Chan's short response to the same question stands out in bold relief, "To

get all As." He has also internalized his mother's standards for evaluating teachers, telling the researcher that he likes strict teachers because they punish the kids that are disruptive in the classroom.

In summary, Pattern I parents are familiar with U.S. schools, perceive themselves as being very secure in America, and assume their children will make it in the future. Not having attended U.S. schools, being immigrants and non-college graduates, Pattern III parents have neither familiarity with U.S. schools, perception of their own success, nor reasonable certainty of the future success of their children.

A Typology of Families on a Continuum

In this section, we briefly describe how Pattern II "moderately secure" parents fit into the continuum between our Pattern I and Pattern III parents. Analyzing data on the four Pattern II families, we found that the Ma, Yee, Kao, and Hung families have elements of both Pattern I and Pattern III. These Pattern II families have stronger ties to traditional Chinese parenting styles than do Pattern I parents. At the same time, they also reflect middle-class Euro-American parenting styles more so than do Pattern III parents. Thus Pattern II should not be viewed as merely a catch-all kind of category for parents who do not fit either of the other two patterns. We postulate that these families have their own set of circumstances in that, more than either Pattern I and Pattern III parents, they must deal with the pulls of two separate and often contradictory forces. The four case studies presented in the next section explore how these families attempt to find a balance in parenting styles.

A number of important similarities cut across Pattern II families. In the four families, the parents resemble Pattern I parents in that they perceive themselves as being reasonably secure in America and fairly successful. They are also quite confident that their children will find success in this country. Only one of the four families includes parents who have not attended any U.S. school or college. This family, the Yees, could in fact be considered to be financially struggling, but they feel very comfortable about being in the United States, and describe themselves as doing "okay." Of the ten families in our study, the Yee family is the most difficult to categorize in that their views and practices are not the ones expected of parents who were educated entirely overseas, they are not proficient in English, and they have a relatively low income. Their views and practices can be understood and explained more easily when one considers their perceptions of their status rather than their objectively defined conditions.

There are other commonalities among Pattern II families that should be noted here. First, parents' and children's cultural identity in these families is the most disparate — that is, there is more of a cultural and linguistic gap between the children and the parents than in Pattern I and Pattern III families.

Second, while almost all parents in this sample work long hours, only Pattern II parents cite time pressure as being a significant problem in trying to make time for all their children. In one of the four families, the mother is not employed outside of the home and this is the only family in which time pressure has not been cited as a problem. Still, she has trouble juggling the schedules of four children. Thus we can say that Pattern II families perceive themselves as experiencing some success in the United States but at a significant time cost.

All four Pattern II families, when asked if they want to send their children to college, reply in the affirmative, but add that they would not be terribly upset if the children choose not to go. This type of answer is closer to the answers given by Pattern I "highly secure" parents. In addition, Pattern II parents make very little conscious effort to prepare their child to enter a multicultural world, probably because they believe that their child is already able to do so.

Finally, Pattern II families tend to have a more traditional influence in their lives. For three families, their relatives, with whom they have extensive contact, maintain Chinese traditions, and in two of these families, this clearly creates conflict.

Profiles of Pattern II Families

The profiles are based on analysis of data collected over two or three years for four children: James Ma, Stacey Yee, Lori Kao, and Megan Hung. The number of family contacts ranged from 5 to 8. These were not necessarily home visits, as interviews were sometimes held in parents' offices or other public places. In addition, the children's teachers were interviewed, and their school records and school work were reviewed. Demographic data on these families can be found in Appendix A. Sketches of these families can also be found in the Year III Project Report (Siu, 1993).

Each family will be described according to the nine dimensions that pertain to beliefs and practices that were used to portray Pattern I and Pattern III families.

James Ma

In the entry interview, Mrs. Ma admitted that she was surprised her family was recommended for this project because she felt she has not done anything to aid James' success in school. Her feeling of inadequacy stems from three sources. First, James' parents both work very long hours and on weekends, and feel they are unable to provide James with the time he deserves. Second, James' parents face pressures from their more traditional extended family, which plays a visible role in their lives. Third, Mrs. Ma often is ambivalent about what to do for James, wondering if he is acting in a "proper" manner.

Mr. and Mrs. Ma operate their own business with more than one office, which requires them to spend long hours at work. Mrs. Ma has a weekend job as a health care professional as well. There are two reasons why they chose to have their own business. First, they believe that there is a glass ceiling for them in their respective professions because they are Chinese. Second, having one's own business gives them flexible working hours and allows them to bring James to the office if necessary. On a typical weekday, Mrs. Ma picks James up from his after-school program and brings him to her office. James then waits in the office until almost 9 p.m. when his father closes the business office that is located in a nearby town and comes to join his family in Mrs. Ma's office. By the time they get home, it is 10 p.m. In fact, James has earned the nickname "Panda Eyes" because of the dark circles under his eyes due to his late hours.

James is surrounded by his extended family. While James is an only child and lives alone with his parents, Mr. Ma's parents and many cousins from both sides of the family live nearby. Thus, James spends a lot of time with his relatives. In fact, when James was in kindergarten, he used to spend the mornings with his grandfather, who would then walk him to school. James also holds a special place in his family as the first born grandchild. Along with this unique honor comes pressure on James to live up to family expectations, though at the same time he is afforded some latitude in his behavior. James is, however, very different from his cousins in that his behavior is more westernized. Mrs. Ma discusses the dilemma she feels with her extended family, saying that, "My husband and I sometimes feel we have 'lost face' in the presence of my husband's family because James is so active. His cousins do not exhibit that kind of behavior, [and] in general, my husband and I are seen as very permissive."

James' teachers and parents describe him as an active child. Mrs. Ma also thinks that James is very outgoing, especially compared to other Chinese children, and can make friends easily. She notes that when he has the choice, James prefers to play with other children rather than adults, in part, his mother thinks, because he spends a lot of time as the only child among adults.

The Mas feel tension due to James' personality and the expectations of their extended family. While James acts very American — outgoing, friendly, and "unruly" — the rest of his extended family remains very traditional. Mrs. Ma brings up this concern in almost all the interviews, asking the researcher whether she thinks James is well-behaved or not (an indication of his "Americanness"). Her ambivalence is in part accentuated by a feeling that due to her work commitments she is not doing enough to help James in either the academic area or the emotional domain. But the ambivalence is also prompted by her realization that a "typical" Chinese parent would be doing more for the child and that her practices fall short of those modeled for her by her sister-in-law.

Of the four Pattern II families, the Ma family is the one in which English is spoken most often. The parents speak a combination of both English and Cantonese with each other, and mostly English with James. (However, they were interviewed in Cantonese for this study.)

James does little in the way of extracurricular activities. Due to his parents' hectic work schedule, they have little time to shuttle James to activities. James does attend an after-school program located at the Midtown School. James and his mother also enrolled in a computer class offered by the Midtown School designed for both parents and children to take together. However, they never finished the program due to Mrs. Ma's work commitments. In addition, James was signed up for a Chinese painting class, which also had to be dropped due to the difficulty in getting James to the classes. Given the constraints of her work, it seems that Mrs. Ma has accepted, for now, the fact that classes and activities on weekdays are impossible.

1. The Meaning of and Ingredients for Success

Mrs. Ma does not go into much detail when discussing what it would take for James to be successful. She says, "I want him to be financially independent. I don't care what occupation he chooses. I wouldn't mind at all even if he decides to open a restaurant. I also want him to be able to take care of himself. That is important."

The Mas think of James as average rather than successful. Mrs. Ma keeps referring to one of James' cousins, who is a year younger, as much orighter.

2. Parental Perception of Their Roles in Education

Due to her heavy work schedule, Mrs. Ma knows that she should be doing more for James, but she simply does not have the time. She often feels that she is failing as a parent because of her difficulty in making time for James. For example, James' first grade teacher

asked her to try to spend more time with James on his reading. However, she was unable to set aside enough time to make sure that James was doing enough reading.

Mrs. Ma's ambivalence about her proper role can also be seen in her discussion of parents trying to teach their children academics at home. She says:

> Some of my friends taught their kids addition and subtraction before they go to the first grade. I don't think that's necessary.... But in some way I feel uncomfortable for not doing that.

She also notices that "even uneducated" Chinese parents ask their children to do arithmetic with toothpicks in restaurants, implying that she should have done more in terms of home-teaching.

3. Parental Expectations and Rationale for Schooling and Extracurricular Activities

As stated previously, Mrs. Ma does not think of James as overly successful. Compared to other Chinese children, the Mas think James is even a little below average in academics; compared to children from other racial groups, he may be a little better. She says,

> I think my husband and I always think of James as an average person. From talking to teachers, we gather that he is at least average.... I would not be happy if he gets below a B because I think he is a solid B student.... You know, he's not as bright as his cousin...

In terms of James' future education, Mrs. Ma "expects him to...if we can afford it...to go to college. Any college is fine." As already stated, James' parents want him to be financially secure, but do not care what type of occupation he chooses.

Actually, Mrs. Ma expresses more concern about James' character development than she does about his academic development. During the second year of this study, Mrs. Ma said that her husband and she were contemplating a move to a suburb, so that James could attend a better school. However, "better" does not mean a school that is stronger academically, but a school in which the children are more "refined" and parents more "cultured:"

> James is rough in our viewpoint compared to the suburban kids. He's just like a city kid. His father wants him to be around a good community. Maybe a good teacher, something like that. We think that is good for him and he need not be an excellent student.

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Many immigrant parents tell their children that they need to do better in school or they will end up working in poorly paid and undesirable jobs like their parents. However, this strategy, which Mrs. Ma tried once, did not seem to work with James, for he thinks that he is already doing well in school.

James does not attend many extracurricular activities because of his parents' busy schedule. The after-school program is a necessity and so is the summer program. James is enrolled in these programs primarily because of the parents' work schedule and the fact that as an only child he needs peer interactions. The activities in which Mrs. Ma tried to get James involved (e.g., computers) were those which offered good opportunities for learning new skills without pressure. James has not attended Chinese school, but the Mas want to send him there, not so much to learn the language as to learn discipline — a good way to "rein in" his boisterous personality.

4. Planning and Obtaining Information Regarding Schooling

Having her business in Chinatown and several relatives working in Chinatown, Mrs. Ma has ready access to information about programs and activities in that community.

She has not put forth a lot of energy in trying to identify resources in other neighborhoods, since it will not be feasible for her to make use of them in the near future. In none of her interviews has she mentioned preparing James to take the SSAT or to acquire any particular skill.

5. Monitoring Homework and Promoting Literacy

This is an area in which Mrs. Ma considers herself totally inadequate. While she encourages James to read, this is not always the outcome: "He will take those books home but he doesn't intend to read. He prefers drawing or painting." James enjoys having someone read to him. Unless someone sits next to him, he will lose interest when he comes to a word he doesn't know. James also does not have a routine for doing his homework. Sometimes he does it in the after-school program, sometimes at his mother's office, and sometimes when he gets home from the office, late at night. Mrs. Ma prefers that James do his work in the after-school program, although she says that the teachers there are too quick to tell James the answer.

6. School Involvement and Parental Assertiveness

The Mas simply do not have time to volunteer in school, although Mrs. Ma was encouraged to do so by a relative. Because of the proximity of her office to the school, Mrs. Ma is able to walk to the school to see a performance or meet with the teacher. Her most extensive contact with school came when James' first grade teacher asked Mrs. Ma to spend time each day with James, helping him to read. While Mrs. Ma wanted to follow his suggestions, she was unable to do so. The teacher believed that if Mrs. Ma could give James 15 minutes every day, James could be in an advanced level reading group.

> I said, you can tell I am not doing my job...I told the teacher that I love to motivate him and I love for my kid to enjoy reading, but at this point I found I couldn't do it. He asked me to try. He said all the honor roll students like to read.

Surprisingly, James' reading improved and the first grade teacher praised the mother when talking to the researcher about how cooperative and conscientious she was, assuming that James' improvement was tied to her effort.

7. Socialization Toward Functioning in a Multicultural Society

Mrs. Ma, who immigrated to the U.S. as a young adolescent, describes her identity this way:

> I do not identify myself with people in Hong Kong, even though I came from there, or with people in Mainland China. I am most comfortable with American-born Chinese or Chinese who have been in the US a long time. If you press me, I will describe myself as a *yee mun* (immigrant) and "still Chinese".... Let me say socially I am not completely comfortable with whites. Professionally I am able to forge a relationship with them at my other job. For one thing, socially I can't talk to them about baseball or nursery rhymes since I did not grow up in this country. No, I don't feel American.

However, Mrs. Ma has no doubts about James' feelings about his cultural identity. This story is very significant:

> He is American and feels that way. The first day of school he came home and talked about the pledge of allegiance. In front of the whole extended family, he shouted, "I am American!" All the relatives said, "No, no, James, you are not American." I remember it was mealtime and one of James' aunts removed his plate from him and said, "James, say you are Chinese American and I will give the plate back to you." James is the most westernized grandchild in my husband's family.

An interesting footnote to this story is that when asked by the researcher what his identity was, James responded that he was Chinese. Mrs. Ma discounted this answer,

responding that James was probably afraid to tell an adult his true feelings; saying he is Chinese is the safest action since his extended family has expressed disapproval of his claiming he is an American. She notes that James is very sensitive to what other people expect him to say and that he wants to avoid hurting others' feelings.

Mrs. Ma's own family of origin does not keep Chinese traditions to the same extent as her husband's family:

> My husband's family is very traditional. The hierarchy is there. You have to use correct titles like *dai goo ma* (oldest sister of one's father) and *sam yee jeung* (husband of third sister of one's mother). In my own family, we are more casual, going by first names.

As another example, James' grandfather believes in the Chinese tradition of fortune telling by facial features. He thinks James has a *fook sheung* — a countenance indicating a bright future.

The Chinese, out of respect, do not usually name their children after fathers, mothers, or any relative from an older generation, but James' middle name is the same as his father's. This is evidence that Mr. and Mrs. Ma are not very traditional. Nevertheless, Mrs. Ma says that she would like James to know more about Chinese traditions:

> I would never contradict my father-in-law [the head of the family]. That's one reason why I want to send James to Chinese school in the fall, to learn discipline, to sit still, to get a sense of Chinese traditions and not so much how many Chinese characters he can write.

Mr. and Mrs. Ma have strong feelings about being minorities in the United States. Mr. Ma talks about the discrimination he experienced from the whites when trying to open his business. When asked about her perception of the status of Chinese people in America, Mrs. Ma states:

> As for Chinese in America, in general I think we are third class citizens. The whites are first class and the blacks are second class.

In fact, one of the reasons the Mas started their own business is because they feared a glass ceiling in the professions in which they got their degrees. At least in their own business, they can find a niche within the Chinese community and no whites can take it away from them.

While acknowledging the prevalence of racial prejudice and discrimination against the Chinese, the Mas are reluctant to discuss these issues with James at this time. Reflecting on her own experience, Mrs. Ma says,

> When I was young, my parents didn't tell me the reality of the world. I think my parents sheltered us from that knowledge. I was very happy when I was young. I think it's good to have that [innocent] stage.

8. Attention to the Child's Social and Emotional Development

Keenly aware of what a child needs from his parents, Mrs. Ma feels guilty about the effect of her work schedule on James:

> This is certainly not the kind of ideal family life I envisioned. James is like a gypsy wandering from place to place with his bag of belongings. I feel guilty about this. I can't take him to the public library even though I know he likes books. When we shop at a grocery store, he will hang around the book and magazine section. We spend so little time together that James doesn't care what we do as long as we are together. He likes shopping with me or just hanging out in the office.

James also knows that he does not get to spend as much time with his parents as do other kids. Mrs. Ma reports a statement made by James: "Mommy works too much. She works so much that she is not giving me what average mommies give to their kids."

In spite of all the self-reported problems in the lifestyle of this family, the researcher as well as all the teachers who have taught James are impressed with his social skills and engaging personality. His parents are proud of him and enjoy his company. He is a very friendly, outgoing, and energetic child, eager to help the teacher in the classroom and his mother in the office.

9. The Family in the Context of the Community

Unlike the other families in our sample, the Ma family's structure and routine can be characterized as complex — hectic schedules, multiple care-givers, and multiple "homes" and "communities." The Mas own a house in Rockcliff, a middle-class town 10 miles south of Boston, with a population of 85,000. The Asian population in this town has increased dramatically in the last ten years. Mr. Ma has a second business office in Rockcliff, but Rockcliff is by no means the Ma family's only, or even primary, community. They do not use many of the town's resources. Chinatown and Langston, another neighborhood in Boston, may be considered the family's other significant communities because of Mrs. Ma's office, the church the Mas used to attend, the child's school and after-school program, and the residences of relatives. At one time Mr. Ma also did community service work in Chinatown.

If we define the community as a reference group, the extended family (on Mr. Ma's side) is one that has exerted the most influence on these parents.

Stacey Yee

At first glance, Stacey's family seems to be much like the typical recent immigrant family. At the start of this study, Mrs. Yee had been in the country for only six years. Mr. Yee has never become a U.S. citizen, and both parents work in the restaurant business and are not proficient in English. Yet these parents' beliefs and practices part company with the three families characterized as Pattern III "tenuously secure." Both Mr. and Mrs. Yee feel positively about being in the United States, perceive their status as fairly secure, and talk in terms of putting their roots down in this country. While the Yees realize that they have many financial limitations — the lack of health insurance and the need for the free school lunch program — they do not see themselves as deprived. Mrs. Yee states her general outlook on life this way:

> My standard for life is not high. I only want my family living together happily and I don't care whether I have a house or not. I hope we can provide for the family and live together with our own parents.... I like America better than China because there is more freedom in America.

When asked to draw a picture of her family, Stacey includes her parents and two younger sisters, as well as grandparents, aunt and uncle, and cousins. This family is closely knit, and they live near their extended family. The grandparents and cousins often take care of Stacey after school. In fact, Stacey looks upon her older cousin Jessica as a role model, and enjoys playing and doing school work with her. She also plays with other children in the neighborhood. Mr. and Mrs. Yee's work schedules do not permit them to take Stacey to organized extracurricular activities.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Yee work long hours and weekends. Mr. Yee speaks Toisanese at home and Mrs. Yee speaks Cantonese. Mr. Yee's English is more limited than that of his wife. Stacey is trilingual, speaking English to her cousins, in addition to Toisanese and Cantonese.

Stacey's parents repeatedly refer to Stacey's inborn inclination to learn, being not only willing but actually excited by the opportunity to learn to read and do simple math before she even started formal schooling. Stacey is also described by her parents as independent, which may have something to do with her birth order, being the oldest of three children. For example, one time when her sisters and she got separated from their mother in a department store, she calmly asked a store clerk to announce their mother's name over the intercom. Stacey gets along very well with children and adults alike.

1. The Meaning of and Ingredients for Success

When asked about their definition of success, Mrs. Yee speaks less about doing well in school and more about the type of person Stacey will or should be. While getting good grades is important, it is far more important that she does not become arrogant. Mrs. Yee tells a story about Stacey's being teased at school when she got a very short haircut that made her look like a boy. Mrs. Yee's response reveals a lot about her outlook on life and childrearing philosophy:

> I wouldn't want to praise her too much because that would make her feel she has everything going for her. Like this haircut incident, it was actually good that she got laughed at in school. All her life, people — teachers, grandparents, my husband, friends — have been telling her she is pretty, she is good, etc. Everybody likes her. No one has ever said anything negative about her. She simply did not know how to take it when people made comments about her hair. As soon as her father saw the short hair, he said it was ugly. Grandma didn't like the haircut either. I had a long, long talk with her, explaining that no matter what you do, what you are, you can't please everyone. Someone will say something. Don't let it bother you. Learn to live with that.

In spite of the Yees' lack of financial success by prevailing societal standards, these parents do not place a premium on Stacey's attaining financial success. In their conversations with the researcher, there is no mention of a prestigious college or a high paying job.

2. Perception of Parental Role in Education

The Yees share the view of many Chinese immigrants that they must not rely totally on the school to educate their children. Convinced of the need for parents to be supplementing teachers at home, Mrs. Yee says:

> I think that family education is also important. You can't depend completely on the school system. Although I don't know much, I am willing to sit with her when she is doing her homework.... I didn't have a chance to go to school [due to the Cultural Revolution]. I have the duty now to bring her up to be a responsible person. I'll try my best to educate her. I think the education from parents is very important. The behavior of the child is directly related to the parents. School is important but the children spend most of their time in their home. Parents cannot shirk their responsibility.... Parents also play an important role in stimulating their child and helping their child to learn by giving them homework or telling them stories.

Mr. Yee echoes his wife's sentiment, saying that the most important element in becoming a successful student is "the family expectations." He conveys his expectations to Stacey through their daily conversations. In addition, he knows that he needs to spend time with his children in order to help them.

> I like to talk to them and spend time with them. If you don't spend time with them, how do you know what happened to them in school?

Mr. and Mrs. Yee try to foster Stacey's school achievement through buying workbooks and creating homework for her. Stacey was given homework before she started school. Her mother explains that Stacey has free time and likes to learn, so she continues to give her simple letters and arithmetic to do at home. Stacey's sister who is a year younger, is not as interested in worksheets, so Mrs. Yee does not push her to do them. On a home visit, the researcher noted that there were many workbooks lying around the house, but that Stacey and her sisters were not told to use them.

Concerning higher education, the Yees realize that as parents who do not know the language and the educational system well, they can play only a minimal role in helping their children. A recurrent theme in their conversations with the researcher is that the children will have to struggle on their own to reach a high level.

The Yees are not sure what kinds of behavior teachers in the United States expect. Mrs. Yee says,

> In China, if you have good behavior, are hard working and outstanding in class, you will be the teacher's pet. I don't really know what the situation is in America.

3. Parental Expectations and Rationale for Schooling and Extracurricular Activities

The Yees believe that it is much too early to talk about possible future professions for Stacey given the fact that she is only in kindergarten. In terms of Stacey's future, their expectations for Stacey's schooling and career definitely take a backseat to their expectations for her as a person. There is a general expectation that she should "get more education." At the same time, Mr. Yee expresses the limitations he puts on his expectations:

> I don't have very high expectations for them [Stacey and her sister]. Sure, I do want them to be good, to have good grades in school. But I can't control that. I have a "long-hour" job and I don't have time to take care of their school work. They have to depend on themselves.

Mrs. Yee echoes this view. While voicing a desire to see Stacey go to college, she realizes that the choice and the burden is Stacey's. She says,

> I don't want to push her. I will let her go to college only if she is willing to go. But we're unable to help her academically to achieve higher education. We would like to see how far she can get by herself. She must struggle to reach that point by herself.

Like the Pattern III immigrant parents described earlier in this report, the Yees try to impress upon Stacey the value of schooling by drawing her attention to the parents' own situation. In this quote, we see how Mrs. Yee tries to motivate Stacey:

> Sometimes when we ask her to study, she doesn't know why she is the only one who needs to study, and her sister doesn't have to. We will explain to her that she is growing up and can't spend too much time on play. Daddy doesn't know English and he has to work very hard in a restaurant. We encourage her to learn. Sometimes when we are driving on the road, she will ask the meaning of some English sign. Mommy doesn't know. I will tell her that she will learn it soon in school and she can then teach Mommy and Daddy. My English is not that good.

Unlike Pattern III parents, the Yees are less concerned about the quality of their children's schools. This may stem from their unfamiliarity with how widely the standards for different schools vary. In discussing their move to Jefferson School from Midtown School, Mrs. Yee's attitude is casual:

> Of course, Jefferson School may not be as good as Midtown, but if my daughter can pick up some knowledge here, that is fine with me.

As stated earlier, during the school year Stacey does not have any structured extracurricular activities; instead, she spends her free time with her cousins. One of the reasons that she does not have any extracurricular activities is the time pressures under which her parents operate. For example, much as Mrs. Yee would like Stacey to learn to read and write Chinese in a Chinese school, she admits that, "The problem is really that I don't have the time to send her there or to pick her up." The same is true of music lessons.

> When Stacey was in kindergarten, she liked to sing. I want her to learn piano and singing but I'm not familiar with that. When we were in church, she sat in front of a piano and played it once. Before I send her to any class I want to make sure that she's really interested in music or singing. In that case, I'd like to give her my best and help her to learn music. Personally, I am interested in music too.

Thus, the child's interest in the activity is key, not the parent's judgment that it will be useful in the future or that it will build discipline and self-control.

4. Planning and Obtaining Information Regarding Schooling

Mrs. Yee seems to get most of her information about schooling from her relatives. She learns through them that Midtown is a good school, particularly in math, that Jefferson

School is fine, and where to purchase workbooks. She does not go out of her way to look for information. There is not much talk of long-range educational planning for the children, a reflection perhaps of the parents' "take it easy" approach to everything.

5. Monitoring Homework and Promoting Literacy

Mr. and Mrs. Yee used to assign about 15 minutes of homework to Stacey every day. Mr. Yee considers homework to be important because it develops "a good habit." However, since Stacey started second grade, the parents have discontinued assigning extra homework partly because Stacey is getting enough from school and partly because Mrs. Yee has difficulty designing homework at Stacey's level. As mentioned earlier, the Yees also buy workbooks for Stacey, who is free to work on them as she pleases. For homework from school, Stacey does not seem to need a lot of prodding from the parents. Occasionally, she asks her parents to grade her workbooks. With respect to reading, the parents do not spend much time reading themselves, nor do they read to the children.

6. School Involvement and Parental Assertiveness

Contact between Mr. and Mrs. Yee and the school is minimal. A combination of work schedule and lack of English proficiency makes active involvement with the school difficult if not impossible. They go to the school only for regular parent-teacher conferences and when there is a problem. Once, Stacey mentioned to her mother that she got into trouble in class for talking too much. Mrs. Yee immediately sent a note to the teacher asking for a meeting, and after the meeting she calmly explained to Stacey that she would miss the teachers' instructions if she talks too much. Stacey never had a problem after that.

7. Socialization Toward Functioning in a Multicultural Society

The Yees maintain a very Chinese household, but Mrs. Yee feels a strong affinity with the United States:

> When I was in school [in China] we talked more about politics than academics. America is a society of more freedom. I like to live in the United States. Being here is good.... I like America because you always have the opportunity to be educated.

This positive attitude toward her adopted country must have some effect on the children. While it is true that the Yees state that they'd rather train Stacey to be a responsible person than talk about ethnicity, they do deem America to be a good place and view Americans as friendly people.

Another reason that the Yees do not worry about Stacey's fitting in stems back to her preschool experience. She attended an otherwise all African American full-day preschool program for a year. While the parents picked the program for convenience rather than for the purpose of preparing her to interact with African Americans, the experience was a positive one. Stacey learned English very fast, made a good adjustment, and was well-liked by teachers and children. Her parents reason that since Stacey had no problems then, she probably would be able to function in a multicultural society.

Like Pattern III "tenuously secure" parents described earlier, Mr. and Mrs. Yee define themselves as Chinese. Stacey says that she is Chinese but also that she is an American because she was born in America.

Stacey and her family hold to many Chinese customs and practices, and Stacey's knowledge of these is quite impressive. Stacey's family maintains an ancestors' shrine in the home; both Stacey and her sister know that they were born in the Year of the Rabbit and the Year of the Snake, respectively. We already mentioned Stacey's familiarity with two Chinese dialects, but that is not enough for Mrs. Yee.

> I want to send her to a Chinese School because she doesn't even know how to write her Chinese name.... I want her to be a bilingual person. It's important to know how to speak and read Chinese. She has a cousin in California who knows how to read Chinese newspapers, and speak and write Chinese. I understand it's so hard for American-born Chinese to write Chinese.

8. Attention to the Child's Emotional and Social Development

The Yees' approach to childrearing is similar to that of Pattern I "highly secure" parents. As we pointed out earlier, the most important childrearing goal for the Yees is to turn the child into a responsible, good adult, one who is not arrogant. To keep Stacey humble, her parents either give mild verbal encouragements or very tiny prizes (some crayons or a coloring book) when she gets good grades.

Stacey's life is not regimented; she has a lot of free time to do what she wishes. She is free to do the workbooks the parents buy for her, or put together jigsaw puzzles, or watch TV or videotaped cartoons, or simply chat with her cousins. As Mrs. Yee says, "Pushing hard is not always useful."

Mr. and Mrs. Yee place a premium on building a close relationship with their children so that there will always be sharing and communication. The best thing they can do for their children is to "spend time with them, know who their friends are, talk to them." Mrs. Yee believes that "if parents are too busy then they will ignore their children unconsciously and

their children will no longer be close to you." Mr. Yee, although he is busy, says that he makes time to spend with his three girls because it is very important to him.

The Yees value many "American" traits, such as independence and self-reliance, and attempt to foster this in Stacey. They are not overprotective, as evidenced by the fact that Stacey can walk to school by herself or visit relatives by train or bus.

The Yees refrain from constantly speaking about their hopes for Stacey for fear that this will create pressure. In kindergarten, school is mostly play and this is fine with Mr. Yee because:

> When they are old enough to get into society, it will help them to adjust to *sei wui dai hok* (literally meaning the University of Society). A lot of experience is simply not taught in school.

His wife shares his view on young children:

> I want her to take it slowly...when she gets into second grade, she will find out that school is more competitive. At that time she will learn about comparison. That is reality.

9. The Family in the Context of the Community

The Yee family resides in Jefferson, a lower middle-class town about five miles north of Boston with a population of 54,000. Like James, Stacey is surrounded by an extended family, who at one point shared the same house. Other relatives live nearby in the same town. Due to the availability of grandparents and cousins, the Yee family makes less use of community resources. Mrs. Yee and her daughters used to attend a Chinese church that is not located in Chinatown, but they no longer go. Although Mrs. Yee's job is in Chinatown, since Stacey's transfer from Midtown School (in Chinatown) to Jefferson School in Jefferson, the Yee family has increasingly identified Jefferson as their community. They not only know their neighbors, they also make use of the town's parks and swimming.

Lori Kao

Lori's family differs from all other families in our sample because Mr. and Mrs. Kao are ambivalent about coming to America and setting down roots in this country. Neither of them is a U.S. citizen although they have been in this country for eight years. They came to the United States as doctoral students, not expecting to settle here. However, it should be noted that over the course of the two years of data collection, a change has been observed in the parent's attitudes toward their status.

Lori's grandparents lived with her for one-and-a-half years until she finished kindergarten, when they returned to China. Lori visits them in China every summer. The grandparents were teachers in China and had a very traditional view of childrearing, one that caused conflict with their son and his wife, leading finally to their decision to return home. The grandparents thought that Lori's parents were too permissive and bought too many toys. Mrs. Kao admits that because Lori is an only child, she and her husband do have the tendency to treat her as if she were the sun, that is, she is the entity around which their lives revolve.

Lori's parents speak Mandarin at home, to each other and to the child. Lori herself uses Mandarin when talking to her grandparents and parents, and English with her friends. The researcher notes that Lori is very fluent in Mandarin although she does speak with a non-native accent.

During the first year of the study, Lori was extremely shy around strangers. With friends, however, Lori can be quite different. In fact, her grandparents believe that she can be overbearing. Mrs. Kao describes her daughter as a typical girl who likes playing with dolls. Children like to play with Lori because she has a vivid imagination and is very good at inventing play situations. Lori's first grade teacher concurs with this assessment. He says that although Lori was shy at first, she has started to be more independent and has shown more risk-taking behavior, which he applauds.

Lori attends the after-school center at her school. Her other extracurricular activities include Chinese language school, a drawing class (offered at the Chinese language school), and gymnastics. She also participates in the chess club at school. In addition, Lori attended the Town Musical School one summer.

1. The Meaning of and Ingredients for Success

In the long quote that follows, Mrs. Kao explicates fully her view of what constitutes success:

> First of all, I think she should be a part of the American mainstream. This is very important. Generally speaking, Chinese parents would like their children to be very good at their studies. But this is only one aspect, because you are a minority member and are apt to experience discrimination, I think. If your academics is not very strong, then you would have more problems. However, academics is only one thing, on the other hand, entering the mainstream is very important. That means you should have some similarity with American children. Chinese children have many differences from American children. Just like us, our life here is not easy, for instance, we don't have good communication with Americans. If we have some unfair treatment we usually just tolerate it. We would not openly say, "I don't like it" or simply say "No." But as our next generation, if they want to live a pleasant life, this aspect is very important. You have to behave like a mainstream member and you've got to know how to say "No." You've got to communicate with them, so you could have a more enjoyable life experience.... Then other social activities, they are also related to social development. You have to know how to play piano, how to draw, these things could help you to communicate with other people or help you to get along with others. You would have a better feeling of yourself, and your friends or colleagues would think your life is not bad. I don't know what Lori will do, this will depend on her interest. But from my personal perspective, I would think if you want to have a better life in American society, you'd better major in humanities or social science, not in science.... I think in America you have to be communicative, if you are isolated, your life might not be enjoyable. You will not find many pleasant things...

It is very clear from the above quote that Lori must join the mainstream in order to be successful, because it is only in the mainstream that she will be happy. It is interesting to note that for Lori to be successful, she must be unlike her mother, who is both a scientist and someone who has difficulty communicating with Americans.

The path to success, regardless of which career Lori chooses, is to work hard at everything:

> In learning, in everything you do. For instance, I told Lori to work hard in gymnastic exercises. Working hard in everything she does. If you do not work hard, you will never be successful. Interest is not essential, you have to work hard to make it.... Whatever you do, you must do well.... If you want to be a teacher, you must be a good teacher. That's really important.

2. Perception of Parental Role in Education

Although Lori's parents do not know much about the American educational system, they see themselves as needing to watch over the school and make sure that it is responsive to Lori's needs. They then work on any issues they feel the school is not addressing. For instance, Mrs. Kao says:

> There is not much academic awareness, not much academic orientation in school. Therefore, we as parents have to make more efforts, have to spend more time and energy in that regard. The schools here don't push, so we have to push. I don't know

> whether we should push or not push. I'm sometimes rather uncertain. It's really hard to say. Anyway, it's a challenge.

While Mrs. Kao worries particularly about the school's math standards, she also was upset at Lori's previous report card, in which she got all "satisfactory" ratings, a sign that there is something wrong with the standards — too low.

Not only does Mrs. Kao worry about the academic standards of schools, she also believes in the inherent superiority of private schools, especially for her daughter, who is an introvert and needs more individual attention. As parents, Mrs. and Mrs. Kao crave closer communication with the school. In this respect, the private school will be better as well because "At public school there is no communication between you and the teacher, because she doesn't know your child well."

3. Parental Expectations and Rationale for Schooling and Extracurricular Activities

The emphasis placed by Mrs. Kao on the child's happiness is similar to that found in Pattern I "highly secure" families. As Mrs. Kao puts it:

> I think children who grow up in America should be happy. The first thing is that they should be happy, and the second is that they should be sociable with other kids. Then as children begin their first and second grades, they should grasp fairly well the academic stuff, of course it would be ideal if they get the best grades. However, I don't think you should push them too hard, you should let them develop naturally. And also I think Lori is different from other kids, every kid is different. Lori belongs to an artist type, she has good creativity.... Lori's teacher has told me a number of times that she is a great artist.... So she is a child of the artist type. She will not be good at doing scientist things. I could easily imagine that Lori will be a good teacher, or be a doctor...

She then adds other things to her definition of happiness: a good job and freedom from monetary worries. Initially Mrs. Kao was not confident that Lori would be very successful because she was not convinced that the child was that promising, but she has since changed her mind, based on the evaluation of a private tutor Lori had while in China. Now that Lori has been judged to be very smart, Mrs. Kao expresses her hopes this way:

> Of course, I hope she will be outstanding in her class. As to what she will like to do in the future, it's hard to say. At least, she should have as much education as possible. She should not drop out on the way to her educational pursuit.

For a future career, Mrs. Kao wants Lori to do something that she is interested in and that will make her happy, although she doesn't want Lori to be a scientist. After a visit to the mother's laboratory, Lori has declared that she definitely has no interest in an occupation that

involves so much working by oneself; she wants to be a teacher instead. The parents have no objections to this career goal.

Education is important to the parents basically because it is the road to a career. In discussing the need for education, Mrs. Kao expresses her strong convictions:

> This is taken for granted. This is for survival. Going to school is just like eating, you cannot survive without education in this civilized society. Going to school is natural, this is necessary. Our civilization has developed to such a state that one cannot accomplish anything without education. This is a very obvious fact.

The rationale for signing Lori up for art and gymnastics classes is primarily based on the child's interest, while with Chinese language school, it is more the mother's wish that Lori learns to read and write Chinese.

4. Planning and Obtaining Information Regarding Schooling

Lori's mother admits to knowing very little about the American educational system and often asks the interviewer for suggestions and information. She explains that she is so busy with her job that she has no time to find out about programs.

Much like her parenting skills, Mrs. Kao's knowledge of the U.S. educational system has come from experience. She has found out that Lori's present school is not as good as her previous one. While she has plans for eventually enrolling Lori in a private school, she has made no effort yet to gather information about other schools.

In planning for Lori's schooling, the parents look at the academic program, but also at whether the school fosters social development of the child. In the latter area, Lori's school has proven to be quite good.

5. Monitoring Homework and Promoting Literacy

One of Mrs. Kao's biggest fears is that Lori would not want to learn how to read. During kindergarten, Lori was not that interested in reading. However, during first grade she started to write a diary, making her mother more confident of Lori's potential to master reading and writing:

> I think this [reading skill development] has something to do with time. Her teacher says this depends on children's interests, some children start reading early.... Lori loves to listen to stories, every night I read her a story...probably it's influenced by age. Compared with Chinese children, she might be a little slower, but compared with American children, she is not slower. You see, we have bought a lot of books for her.... I don't think she has fewer books than other children.

Because the parents often do not get home until 8:30 p.m., these long working hours severely limit what they can do to monitor homework or promote literacy.

6. School Involvement and Parental Assertiveness

Mrs. Kao admits that she and her husband do not feel financially secure enough to take time out to volunteer at school. In fact, they are surprised by how many parents volunteer at the public school as well as the Chinese language school. The only time Mrs. Kao volunteered was when she did an art project with Lori's class during Chinese New Year.

Mrs. Kao, however, does try to make use of some of the school's resources, such as asking the teacher and reading specialist to recommend some good books for Lori to read in the summer.

7. Socialization Toward Functioning in a Multicultural Society

Mr. and Mrs. Kao still retain their Chinese citizenship, so they naturally consider themselves Chinese. Keenly aware of their status of being a racial minority in the United States, they see racial discrimination as inevitable. They are still making efforts to adapt to mainstream culture and feel that life is hard for them although they are highly educated. They are not sure what Lori would say about her own identity, but believe that she would answer Chinese American. As stated previously, the Kaos do not feel as if they are a part of mainstream culture, but wish that Lori would be so as to make her life easier. Interestingly enough, when referring to Lori's ability to speak up when there is some unpleasant experience in school, Mrs. Kao placed her daughter in the category of "American children:"

> American children are better than us. If they have some unpleasant experience they would not put up with it as we used to do, you know. They are not like us, if we have had some unpleasant experience, we just keep it to ourselves.

In spite of Mr. and Mrs. Kao's strong ties to China, they know very little about Chinese traditions because such traditions were the object of vehement attacks during the political upheavals of the Cultural Revolution in which they grew up. During their recent visit to China, however, Mrs. Kao signed Lori up for a Chinese summer school for two weeks and got her a tutor so that she would get a better sense of the Chinese way of doing things. The one Chinese value the parents wish to pass on to Lori is hard work, a prerequisite for any success.

As stated previously, Lori's parents want her to enter mainstream society as they believe that this would afford her a better future. This means that Lori must choose a career

that would make her happy emotionally and not just financially, and that Lori should be able to communicate with members of mainstream society. Yet, it does not seem that the Kaos have any special plans to help Lori attain this goal. A multicultural background for Mrs. Kao should include children whose parents were not born in this country. One of the main faults she finds with private schools is that their student body is not as diverse as that in public schools. Thus, private schools may be less well equipped to prepare Lori for a multicultural world.

It would appear that the Kaos' lack of a detailed plan for preparing Lori to live in a multicultural world may stem from their belief that Lori is already part of it. After all, Lori has no problem making friends with mainstream members.

8. Attention to the Child's Social and Emotional Development

For Mr. and Mrs. Kao, the biggest challenge of parenting is how to foster Lori's social development and creativity without sacrificing academic excellence. (The former is seen by the parents as an American value and the latter, a Chinese value.) As the person most responsible for Lori's development, Mrs. Kao seems to have grown in her understanding of child development during the course of this study. While she always speaks from a developmental perspective, she often displays ambivalence, indicating great uncertainty about whether she is acting correctly. For example, she states:

> Sometimes I want to push her, sometimes I'm afraid of pushing her...putting some academics forward, but Lori doesn't seem interested in it. Is it because she doesn't like it, or that she is too young?... Because you always think that your children should accomplish this or that, therefore you always push them to study. In fact they are still minors, they are not quite six years old yet. I always think Lori has not yet learned to read or to write. When she is attending kindergarten at Chinese language school, she always thinks it's not fun, not very interesting. No playing, no playing. So at this age, my child likes to play and it's hard for us to make any decision. So I don't know whether it is the fact that naturally she does not like studying, or just because she has not grown up to that age yet.... There is so much variance at different age levels. That's my current thinking.

Mrs. Kao's ambivalence about whether to "push or not to push" can be linked to a number of factors. First, her husband's parents are more traditional than she is, and they let their displeasure over Mrs. Kao's parenting practices be known. Second, Lori is taking a very different path than her mother took, and her mother wants her to do many things which she herself is uncomfortable doing (communicate with mainstream culture, going into the humanities or social sciences). Third, Mrs. Kao is not always convinced of Lori's superior intelligence.

Mrs. Kao has grown more secure in her parenting because she has been able to solve or minimize the influences stated above. She admits:

> Every time I worried that Lori was not good at this or that, I would push her. But every time it turned out I was wrong. There seems to be a natural developmental period. Some kids start early.... [Lori] is very intelligent, and I did not think so in the past, but now I believe it.... It's funny, probably we were too negative.

9. The Family in the Context of the Community

Two years ago, the Kaos moved from another city on the eastern seaboard to Greenland, an affluent suburb 8 miles west of Boston. Its public schools enjoy a good reputation, attracting many Chinese American families. The Kaos have no connections to Chinatown, choosing instead to define their community as just their relatives. They would like to go to a church, but so far have not found time to do so. Although they do use some of the resources in their town for Lori, they lack a strong sense of belonging. Mrs. Kao explains:

> Also I think our status is not very stable. For instance, if I have a stable job, I might explore community activities. Currently I'm just too busy.

Megan Hung

Megan's mother is a full-time homemaker with four children. The eldest, a girl seven years older than Megan, serves as both a nurturer and a role model for Megan. Megan's brother, who is two years older, requires and receives a lot of parental attention because of problems with his academics and some allergies. Megan also has a brother three years younger than she is.

Megan's father came to the United States as a child and is familiar with the U.S. educational system. He works as an engineer and does not come home on weeknights until after dinner, but he spends his time with his children on the weekends. Megan's maternal grandparents live in the area, while her paternal grandparents live in New York. Megan does not have much contact with her cousins because they are not close in age. Mr. and Mrs. Hung mostly speak Cantonese to each other at home and the children speak English to each other and a combination of Chinese and English to their parents.

Megan was shy as a young girl, but her mother says that this changed once she began preschool. Now, Megan is confident and competent enough to interact with adults without her mother being close by. For example, she asked the librarian to issue her a library card and offered to stamp due dates on the books. Eager to learn, Megan wants to know everything that her older siblings know and to do everything that they do as well. She is very self-motivated and disciplined. As Mrs. Hung recalls, "Ever since she was young, she has always wanted to know what others knew.... She would feel bad if others could read and write but she couldn't."

Megan's sister attended Chinese language school for three years, but Megan has yet to attend, as her parents want her to be older before she starts. Megan has attended ballet classes, swim classes and also takes piano lessons.

1. The Meaning of and Ingredients for Success

When asked about the relative importance of nature and nurture for success, the Hungs maintain that it depends on what kind of success one is talking about. They believe that nurture is more important when determining if a child is good or bad, but they are uncertain which is more important in determining intellectual accomplishments. Both parents realize that regardless of natural gifts, hard work is required. As Mr. Hung asserts:

> Both [nurture and nature] are very important. If you have the innate ability, you can learn faster than others do. But you have to work hard on that. For those who have less innate ability, hard work and concentration would be the only way to succeed.

Gaining money and status is not success, according to Mr. Hung, unless one is happy too. (This view closely resembles the one expressed by Lori Kao's mother.) The element of autonomy is also critical:

> You can try your best to gain money and status. But if you are not happy, you will fail in the very end. The most important issue is your choice. You have to choose those things you like to do and because you like it, you will be successful.

2. Perception of Parental Role in Education

The Hungs moved from the city to the suburbs because of the reputation of Greenland's school system. Although the move was prompted by the prospect of a better school system, the Hungs, like the rest of the parents in this study, have no illusions that the school will be able to do it all.

> Parents, not schools, need to be responsible for their kids.... People do not want to take responsibility for teaching their kids. Therefore, they ask the government to improve the school system. I don't think it's appropriate.

Mr. Hung sees himself also as a partner of the school, ready to fill in where he thinks he can be of assistance. "I try to understand their performance in school from the teachers to see if I need to help them in any way."

One of the areas where the Hungs feel the need to take a more active role is homework. Like Pattern III "tenuously secure" parents, Mrs. Hung complains about Megan's scant quantity of first grade homework as well as the simplicity of the worksheets. "They are so simple. I think most of the students have already learned it from kindergarten." Mrs. Hung assigns homework whenever she feels there is insufficient homework sent from school. In addition, she teaches all her children to count and recognize the alphabet before starting school because she sees her role as getting her children ready to learn. Besides this, there are other reasons for her extra help:

> If they find themselves knowing something before the teacher teaches, they would be pleased. As a mother, I am proud of them too. Sometimes I would be happy to find they know more than my friends' kids who are the same age with them.

The Hungs also pay attention to behavioral readiness. Mr. Hung talks about training his children to listen to others with concentration. Mrs. Hung concurs, "Ask them to listen

to the teacher, do not talk when teacher is talking. Not to pick up anything which does not belong to you."

3. Parental Expectations and Rationale for Schooling and Extracurricular Activities

The Hungs believe that Megan must choose her own future, although they hope that Megan's interests are of a practical nature. Speaking of expectations, Mrs. Hung presents a view that is almost identical to those of Pattern III "tenuously secure" parents:

> I don't have specific expectations of her. I couldn't tell what's her interest now. But I do want them to go to Harvard or MIT. If she can't make herself get into these schools, I can't help it. I don't want to push them. Although Megan is learning ballet and piano, I won't expect her to become a dancer or pianist. I'd like her to major in a practical subject.... No, I won't agree if they are interested to study music. Music is not practical. I won't support them to study either music or painting. If they want to become a doctor or lawyer, I would not disagree.

As for the rationale for schooling, Mrs. Hung believes that to do well in school is a necessary condition for getting a good job. With a clear focus on the importance of academics, Mrs. Hung finds extracurricular activities to be good as long as they do not interfere with academics. Attending a Chinese language school would be very beneficial to Megan because being bilingual will open up career opportunities or satisfy a college entrance requirement. Still, it is not as important as her school work.

The child's interest in an activity plays a part in parental decisions and if it is absent, Mrs. Hung will not push, as in the case of Megan's older sister dropping Chinese classes.

4. Planning and Obtaining Information Regarding Schooling

Mrs. Hung gets most of her information about children and children's programs from talking to parents and from reading bulletin boards in the public library. For example, she says:

> I talked to another Chinese parent on the day of the open house. She thinks the homework is too simple, too. She suggested that I order some workbooks for her. The teacher just starts teaching them one digit numbers. I think they should teach addition.

Mrs. Hung says that she does not get advice from relatives because their children are younger than hers. She expresses a preference for getting information from Chinese parents because Chinese are more modest than Caucasians, and she does not have to listen to the *lo-fans* bragging about their children.

5. Monitoring Homework and Promoting Literacy

Even though the Hungs are frequent visitors to the public library, these visits do not take the place of buying books. Mrs. Hung has set up a reading corner at the stairwell on the second floor, where there are comfortable pillows, a bookcase, and a list of rules posted. Megan knows that her mother is proud of her reading. In fact, when asked what will make her parents happy, Megan responds, "I will read a book and ask words 'cause they always want us to read books."

Not surprisingly, when asked to give advice to relatives from China about education in America, Mrs. Hung replies:

> I'll tell them to buy books. Sometimes I tell them to buy some toys, they would say, "They are so young. They don't know how to play." But I feel differently. They know. Right? They know how to play and read. You can buy them age appropriate books. But they don't think the kids know enough to use them, even toys. You can learn while you play, right?

The children's TV viewing is not monitored very strictly. Mrs. Hung will bend the rules to fit the circumstances. Assigning extra homework to Megan is sometimes the mother's task and sometimes the older sister's. So is checking homework. When Megan's brother requires extra attention from Mrs. Hung for his learning problems, Mrs. Hung has to find a solution:

> I thought I put most of my attention on Megan's older brother at the beginning and sometimes have forgotten about Megan — and didn't check hers when she's done before she took them back to school. I said we couldn't do that and so we made a sign here and asked her to put up the sign every time she has homework — and took that down once she submitted it — to have me look at it after she finished them and made corrections first.

6. School Involvement and Parental Assertiveness

Mrs. Hung attends parent-teacher conferences and open house, but is not active in the parents' organization. Her husband attends these meetings when his schedule permits because he considers it important "to understand their [children's] performance to see if I need to help them in some way." The Hungs find the teachers to be nice and accessible. Should they have any serious complaint, they claim they would feel comfortable bringing it up with the principal or the teacher. Nevertheless, when they find the amount of homework unsatisfactory, they simply take compensatory measures without complaining.

7. Socialization Toward Functioning in a Multicultural Society

The cultural identity of Mr. and Mrs. Hung is captured in Mrs. Hung's statement "We are not that traditional and not really Americanized." They make no attempt to remind their children that they (the children) are Chinese.

Having grown up in China during the turbulent Cultural Revolution, Mrs. Hung does not know much about Chinese traditions. For example, her husband's father named all four children according to a Confucian tradition, but Mrs. Hung does not know this tradition. The Hung family does celebrate Chinese New Year as well as special days such as the 1st and 15th of every month. Christmas is also celebrated by the Hungs, who honor customs such as trimming the Christmas tree and stuffing the stockings. In spite of a desire to pass on some knowledge about Chinese folk traditions and festivals to their children, Mr. and Mrs. Hung consider such knowledge secondary to the virtues that are valued by Chinese and Americans alike, for example, being more considerate and less self-centered. Mrs. Hung's major annoyance is that Americans overemphasize individualism to the point that people think only of themselves and not enough of others.

Cantonese is spoken in the home by choice — both parents have no trouble speaking English. As mentioned, the parents wish the children could speak, read, and write Chinese, but this is not an issue they wish to push.

Mr. and Mrs. Hung sent their children to preschool so that they could develop some social skills with children and get used to an English-speaking environment, as they speak Chinese at home. Beyond this, the Hungs do not seem worried about their children fitting into a multicultural society, and mention no specific plans to assist their children in this regard.

The issue of racial discrimination is handled the same way as other parents in the study. While acknowledging that she has felt discriminated against, Mrs. Hung has refrained from bringing up this issue with Megan.

8. Attention to the Child's Social and Emotional Development

Mr. Hung speaks of the futility of pushing children:

> [You] can't push [kids] if they're not interested...and that it is all up to them. You cannot push them. If they are not interested in certain subjects, it's hard to push them through. As I have gone through the process, I know it's impossible to push them. Studying is a process of development for them to find their interest.

The computer and some educational software are simply left there for the children to work with (or not) whenever they want. Mrs. Hung has a slightly different perspective from her husband's:

> [Pushing them] depends on what subject it is. If they have no academic interest, I think I would force them to carry on. Academics are more practical.... Of course, I'll do my best to encourage them to finish college but if they really have no desire, there is nothing I could do.

Mrs. Hung is also a great believer in starting early to develop good behavior and cultivating interest in learning. In some ways, she feels torn, as illustrated by this quote:

> ...there is a lot of pressure. Because whether you can get a good job or have a good future depends on your study. It's not only important when they are in high school, you need to nurture them even now when they are in elementary. Sometimes I really don't know what to do.... Sometimes, I am quite rigid. I am their mother, if they don't listen to me in their early childhood, I have no way to ask them to obey me when they grow up.

9. The Family in the Context of the Community

The Hungs live in Greenland, the same suburb in which the Yuens and the Kaos reside. Greenland is an affluent suburb eight miles west of Boston, with a population of roughly 80,000. Its public schools enjoy a good reputation, attracting many Asian American families although there are usually no more than two or three Asian children in each classroom. The Hung family has almost no ties with Chinatown in Boston. Unlike many suburban Chinese Americans, they do not even shop or eat in Chinatown. They regard Greenland as their community, using its library, recreational facilities, and after-school classes. For ballet, piano, and swimming, they take their children to other towns. Like several of the other families in the study, they regard the extended family as their community, and there is considerable visiting back and forth.

Discussion of Findings and Summary

The presence of three patterns of parental views and practices should not obscure the striking similarities found among all the families in our sample. First, all the parents envision a significant role for themselves. In some instances, this vital role in their children's education is shared with the grandparents and siblings. None of these parents view the school as being solely responsible for the children's learning. Furthermore, parents display a basic trust in the school as a legitimate and "helpful" institution, a trust tempered by various degrees of vigilance. Another commonality lies in the positive relationships in these families. Regardless of the style of parenting, all the parents attach importance to their children's emotional well-being and surround the child with love and concern. A noteworthy finding from our interviews with teachers is that parents and teachers seldom discuss with each other their mutual expectations, matters such as the ideal home-school partnership, or their definition of "success" in school (Siu, 1994). Finally, in all ten families, parents recognize the need to develop bicultural competency in their children, which is believed to be a key to success in a society that is predominantly white. A focus on racial barriers to be faced by Chinese Americans is, however, notably absent in the socialization of the children.

It is particularly important for practitioners and researchers alike to gain an insider's perspective of parenting in relation to supporting the child's school achievement. In a recent article on the cultural notion of "training," Chao (1994) argues that "the concepts of authoritarian and authoritative are somewhat ethnocentric and do not capture the important features of Chinese child rearing, especially for explaining their school success" (p. 1111). She explains that the indigenous concepts of *Chao shun* and *guan*, roughly translated into English as control and governance, far from having the negative connotations that the English terms have, involve much care and concern for the child. Our discussion of Pattern III families clearly illustrates this point.

Chinese American parents, especially immigrant parents, are often stereotyped by educators as passive though cooperative. Our data suggest that parents are assertive and resourceful when it comes to their children's education, but some have chosen to devote their energy to home-centered and community-centered activities instead of to those in the actual school building.

Being active in school decision-making bodies and serving as volunteers should not be the only benchmark for measuring parental concern for education. It is encouraging to see that immigrant parents with less money, less familiarity with the school system, and more environmental constraints can and do support their children's education by making the most of personal, family, ethnic community, and mainstream community resources.

Anna Henry, a parent and Director of Playdays, a co-op nursery school in Orinda, California, and a discussant at the Children's Advocate Roundtable held in Oakland, California on June 22, 1995, contends that parent involvement is very subjective:

> Each parent is going to be able to contribute to a child's development in a special and unique way and that needs to be acknowledged, however little it is (p. 8).

Lisa Lee (1995), another discussant at the roundtable and Assistant Director of Parent Services, Inc., proposes that schools should accept all parents by "providing a smorgasbord of services so that they can choose what level of involvement they want to make" (p. 9).

This conceptualization of parent involvement as "smorgasbord," akin to Epstein's typology of six types of activities (Epstein, 1986 and 1992), replaces other less inclusionary images — "hierarchy" of parent involvement (Wissbrun & Eckart, 1992) or "pyramid of parent involvement" (Winters, 1983). In order not to place at a disadvantage those families who for various reasons are unable to engage in school building-based activities, it is imperative to expand the definition of parent involvement to include the host of personal, family, community, social, and political activities that either directly or indirectly contribute to the child's development and education.

Another finding from our study poses a challenge to school administrators and teachers. For many of the Chinese American parents in our sample, official parent information centers offered by the city public school system are less appealing than informal Chinese networks. There is an active informal network that disseminates information about public schools, private schools, bookstores selling educational materials, summer camps, and extracurricular activities. Even Chinese American parents who can speak English prefer obtaining information from other Chinese American parents. It will be a challenge for schools to tap into this resource without turning it into another official organization that represents the school. Sometimes, these informal ethnic "grapevine" networks do evolve into formal organizations but still remain under the control of the parents. (An example is the 9-year-old Chinese American Parents' Association of New York City.) While these organizations collaborate with the school in sharing information and orienting new immigrant students and parents, they also take on the role of advocate for parents against the school when necessary — for example, when inappropriate grade placements of students are made.

One disturbing finding from our study concerns the belief of some parents that they are powerless to change any aspect of the school system because they are not part of the mainstream. Chinese American parents' groups such as the Chinese American Parents' Association mentioned above have tremendous potential in empowering parents unfamiliar with American schools who perceive themselves as outsiders.

Given the smallness of our sample (10), the hypotheses that have emerged from our exploratory study need to be tested with larger samples of Chinese Americans. The second part of this report presents the findings from a survey of a larger sample drawn from Midtown School, Boston. The ultimate intent is neither to identify nor promote the right way of fostering young children's school success — there is more than one way to arrive at similar educational goals. However, school personnel would do well to attempt to understand the diversity that exists even within the same ethnic group of parents, especially the diversity in the intentionalities behind parental practices and strategies to support children's school achievement.

PART II: THE SURVEY

Purpose

The purpose of this survey was to see if some of the findings from an ethnographic study of ten Chinese American families were applicable to a larger sample. In addition to determining the values, hopes, perceptions, and practices that a large sample of Chinese American parents with children in an urban public school have surrounding education, we also wished to test the hypothesis that variations in those values, hopes, perceptions, and practices are linked to parents' familiarity with the U.S. school system. Another objective of the study was to identify factors other than familiarity with U.S. schools that might influence parents' views and practices.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument consisted of two pages (Appendices G and H). The first page contained questions that were also used by Dr. Josephine Bright, Dr. Nitza Hidalgo, and Ms. Anne O'Dwyer, researchers who surveyed parents of African American, Latino, and Irish American students, respectively, in three different schools. These questions were used to obtain basic demographic information on the child and the family — e.g., sex, age, race, family composition, language spoken at home, parents' employment status and highest level of education attained. In addition, there were two sets of questions addressing parents' attitudes toward their children's success. The first set of questions asked parents to rate the importance of five different "hopes," such as that "the child would enjoy learning in school." The second set of questions asked parents to rate the importance of each of six "family values." Parents were asked to indicate, for example, how important it was to them that their children go to college. For each of these two sets of questions, parents were asked to use a four-point scale (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = somewhat important, and 4 = not important) to indicate the level of importance they ascribe to each item.

Besides the common questions on Page 1 used by all four researchers, the survey instrument for Chinese American parents also added two items to the list of six items exploring "family values." Parents were asked to indicate how important it was that their child feel proud of his or her racial and cultural identity, and how important it was that their child be at ease with people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. These questions reflected cultural issues that emerged from the ethnographic data on ten Chinese American families.

The questions on Page 2 of the questionnaire were designed to explore four themes: parents' support of children's school success at home, parents' support of children's school success at school, parents' use of the educational resources in their community, and parents' familiarity with schools in the United States.

For the first three sets of questions, parents were asked to indicate how often they engaged in each of several activities or behaviors using a four-point scale in which 1 = regularly, 2 = sometimes, 3 = seldom, and 4 = never.

Examples of items used to assess parents' support of children's school success at home, in school, and in the community include "Assign extra homework," "Volunteer in school or serve on parents' council," and "Take child to the library or museum" respectively.

In order to gauge parents' familiarity with the U.S. school system, we asked in what country the parents attended school and for which grades, how good a student they felt they were in the United States and/or in another country, and how familiar with the U.S. school system they considered themselves to be. Finally, parents were asked to rate the performance of their child's current school in two areas: academic preparation and social development.

Prior to being used for the survey, the instrument was pretested with one parent who participated in the ethnographic study. Some of her suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. Later the instrument was given to the principal of the school and more revisions were made based on his feedback.

To encourage completion by the parents, the researcher kept the questionnaire short. It was necessary to discard some interesting questions, such as "How long have you stayed in this country?" Information on which grades in U.S. schools parents have attended were deemed more important for the purpose of this survey. Other questions were considered too sensitive for some parents, such as questions about their permanent residency status or citizenship. One limitation of the survey instrument was that we did not provide opportunity for the respondents to add items or make comments. Ratings were confined to the items presented by the researcher; thus it could not be determined if parents had important hopes, values, and activities that were not on the list.

Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis

The survey was conducted in Midtown School, a pseudonym for an urban public school whose student body is 50% Asian American, 30% African American, and 20% Caucasian. Through an earlier project — An Ethnographic Study of How Families Support

School Success in Young Children — the principal investigator had already established a relationship with the principal and some of the teachers of the school.

The principal investigator contacted the principal of Midtown School to gain permission to conduct the study. The principal offered to contact and distribute the surveys to the teachers who would participate. A total of six classrooms were included in the survey: two kindergarten, two first, and two second grade classrooms. One classroom in each grade was monolingual (English) and one was bilingual (Chinese and English). In monolingual classrooms, only Chinese American children received the survey packets; whereas in bilingual classrooms, all the children received them, as they were all of Chinese heritage.

Survey instruments were packaged in envelopes which included a letter of support from the principal, a letter from the researcher explaining the purpose of the study, a return envelope, and the questionnaire. (Please see Appendices C-H.) Both Chinese and English versions of the letters and questionnaire were included in the packet so that parents could choose to read and respond in the language with which they felt most comfortable. (Despite the variety of dialects spoken by the Chinese, there is only one written language.) Parents were instructed to place their completed survey in the envelope provided and seal it for their child to return to the teacher. Upon return of the questionnaire, the child received a small gift from the researcher through the teacher. The teachers returned the sealed surveys to the principal's office.

Ninety-seven surveys were distributed and 90 were returned — a return rate of roughly 94%. After discarding three questionnaires that were not useable, as the children in question were not in kindergarten, first or second grade, 87 questionnaires were retained for analysis.

We encountered two problems in analyzing the data. First, there was not enough variation in some of the factors that we thought could influence parental views and practices. These included, for example, whether the parent was born in the United States, or whether the child was in a bilingual classroom. Examining relationships between variables through correlational analysis was not possible when the distributions were so skewed. What this means is that the survey data limited our ability to compare the views and practices of U.S.-born parents with those of immigrant parents, and the views of practices of parents of children in bilingual classrooms with those of parents of children in monolingual classrooms. Secondly, approximately 30% of the respondents either did not understand the instruction to rate items separately on a four-point scale or found the procedure too tiresome. These respondents either put a check-mark next to a few items, or rank-ordered the entire set of items, or rank-ordered only the top three or four items, leaving the rest blank. Therefore, for the five sets of questions for which separate ratings were required — hopes, values, home-

related practices, school-related practices, and community-related practices — only the scores of those respondents who fully followed the principal investigator's instructions were used for statistical analysis, which is presented in the accompanying tables. Because the other respondents' answers still indicated their priorities with respect to hopes, values, and practices, however, we decided to cross-check those answers for contradictions to the general patterns found in the group that followed the instructions.

Description of the Sample

The majority (77%) of the questionnaires were filled out in Chinese only. The rest (23%) were filled out in either English only or both Chinese and English. Seventy-one percent of the questionnaires were filled out by mothers, 26% by fathers, and 4% by both parents. (Total percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding and because cases with missing information on a particular item were excluded when computing the percentage.)

Seventy-seven percent of the children in the sample were students in bilingual classrooms. The sample was split almost evenly between male (54%) and female (46%) students. The percentages of kindergarten, first grade, and second grade children were 29%, 35%, and 37%, respectively. Most of the children (88%) were born in the United States. The rest were born in China or Hong Kong. All but one of the children were offsprings of Chinese parents; one child had a Caucasian parent and a Chinese parent.

The linguistic backgrounds of the families were rather complex. Chinese (or a specific dialect of the Chinese language) was the primary language in 86% of the homes; English was the secondary language in 56% of the homes. In 29% of the homes, English was neither the primary nor the secondary language. If we treat different Chinese dialects as different languages, then 83% of the families were bilingual (10% naming English as the primary language and Chinese as the secondary one; 59% naming Chinese as the primary language and English as the secondary one; 1% naming Vietnamese as the primary language and Chinese as the secondary one; 1% naming both a Chinese dialect and English as "equal" primary languages; and 12% naming two different dialects of the Chinese language as the primary and secondary languages). This leaves 17% monolingual families, 1% (one family) of which used English exclusively. The rest spoke one Chinese dialect exclusively in the home. Several dialects of the Chinese language were mentioned: Cantonese, Toisanese, and Fukienese (in descending order of frequency).

The majority of homes in the sample (82%) had two parents present; 19% were single-parent families. Most of the families (84%) included only parents and children. The remaining 16% reported having grandparents (11%) and other adults (5%) living in the

household. The number of children in the family ranged from one to six, with close to half of the parents (45%) reporting having two children. Children's ages ranged from 4 to 17. The average age was 8 or 9 for close to half (46%) of the sample.

The parents were predominantly immigrants; only 7% were born in the United States. Other places of birth included China (67%), Hong Kong (16%), and other Southeast Asian countries (10%). Most of the parents (56% of mothers and 86% of fathers) were employed full-time. Twenty-eight percent of the mothers and 9% of the fathers were not employed at all. The highest educational level attained by either parent in the household ranged from less than high school to graduate school. Seventy-seven percent reported high school graduation or higher. The percentage of parents attaining a four-year college degree or higher was 16%. About one quarter (23%) had less than high school education. Given the high percentage of immigrants in the sample, it was not surprising that the majority of the parents (82%) had received their elementary and secondary school education overseas. Most of these parents (60%) considered themselves to be "good" or "excellent" students in their respective homelands.

Is this sample representative of Chinese American parents in Midtown School or in Boston? Complete data are unavailable to answer that question, although the 1990 census data on Boston Chinatown (The Chinatown Coalition, 1994) gives us some indications that our sample is not radically different from the profile of the Chinese family in Chinatown. (It must be noted that not all Chinatown residents are Chinese and that Midtown School does not draw its student body exclusively from Chinatown either.) In 1990, there were slightly over 6,000 people living in Chinatown, 91% of which were Chinese. They are mostly born overseas and came as immigrants (71%), have less than a high school education (65%), do not speak English well (two-thirds), and speak a language other than English at home (71%). The majority (77%) of households with children are households headed by a married couple. The parents in our sample are also predominantly foreign-born, speak a language other than English at home, but are better educated in that only 23% have not completed high school. Similar to those in Boston Chinatown, the households in our sample are predominantly two-parent households.

For this study, academic achievement of the children was gauged solely by parents' responses to the questionnaire. No attempt was made by the principal investigator to review school records in order to verify the responses. Close to half (47%) of the parents judged their children's school achievement to be "good," 25% "average" and 6% "fair." Less than a quarter (21%) of the parents thought their children were doing very well or reached "Honor Roll." No parents perceived their children to be poor in school achievement.

In summary, most of the children in this survey sample were born in the United States, resided in two-parent households where the primary language was Chinese, had one or two siblings, lived in homes without other adults, were enrolled in bilingual classes, and were perceived by their parents to be at least "average" students. The majority of parents in this sample were born and educated overseas, having received at least a high school diploma, and reported themselves to be at least "good" students. For the most part they were employed full-time. (Please refer to Appendix B for detailed demographic information on the survey respondents.) On a number of variables, this survey sample was similar to the one in our ethnographic study. The major difference was that whereas the survey sample included mostly children in bilingual programs, all the children in the ethnographic study were born in the United States and enrolled in monolingual (English) classrooms.

Presentation of Findings

Parents' Hopes and Values

Five "hopes" related to the children's schooling were presented to parents. The parents were asked to use a four-point scale of importance to rate each hope. As the following table shows, "enjoying learning in school" was considered "very important" by the largest majority of respondents. This was followed by "learning to read, write, and do arithmetic," "getting good grades or excellent report cards," "thinking creatively/trying new activities," and "getting along well with teacher and other children."

Table 4: Rating of Hopes for Children in School (N=56)

	1	2	3	4
HOPES:	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Enjoy learning	84%	14%	2%	0%
Learn "the 3 Rs"	80%	14%	5%	0%
Get good grades	68%	29%	4%	0%
Think creatively	60%	26%	11%	4%
Get along with others	59%	29%	13%	0%

* Percentages for each item in this table and other tables in the report may not add up to 100% because of rounding off.

After the "very important" and "important" categories were combined, "enjoying learning in school" still ranked number one in importance, with 98% of the respondents giving

ratings of 1 or 2. Following this were "getting good grades" (97%), "learning to read, write, and do arithmetic" (94%), "getting along well with teacher and other children" (88%), and "thinking creatively/trying new activities" (86%). The order showed only slight variations from the first analysis based on only one rating ("very important").

As mentioned earlier, about one-third of the respondents did not follow the instructions; instead of rating the importance of each item, they rank-ordered the set of five hopes. Despite the different method used, "enjoying learning in school" still emerged as the most important hope: 70% ranked this hope as number 1.

Eight values concerning children's attitudes, behaviors, and future achievements were presented to the parents. In Table 5, the eight values were abbreviated as follows: Happy ("being a happy child"), Obedient ("being an obedient and well-behaved child"), Respect ("having respect for self and others"), College ("going to college"), Living ("making a good living as an adult"), Caring ("becoming a caring adult"), Pride ("feeling proud of own racial and cultural identity"), and Ease ("being at ease with people from all racial/ethnic backgrounds").

Table 5: Rating of Family Values (N=57)

	1	2	3	4
VALUES:	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Respect	81%	19%	0%	0%
Happy	73%	21%	5%	0%
Obedient	72%	25%	4%	0%
College	63%	28%	7%	2%
Caring	58%	18%	23%	2%
Ease	58%	21%	12%	9%
Pride	54%	18%	21%	7%
Living	53%	28%	12%	7%

By just examining the rating of 1, the top three family values were respect for self and others, being a happy child, and being obedient and well-behaved. When ratings 1 and 2 were combined, respect for self and others remained the top value (100%), but being obedient and well-behaved became second (97%) and being a happy child third (94%).

When we examined the responses of 21 respondents who indicated their priorities by rank-ordering the entire set, we found a similar overall pattern. Respect for self and others

was ranked 1, 2, or 3 eighteen times. Being obedient and well-behaved came second with fifteen rankings of 1, 2, or 3; and being a happy child was third with eleven rankings of 1, 2, or 3. Going to college and feeling at ease with people from different racial/ethnic backgrounds came next. It is worth noting that being obedient and well-behaved actually received the largest numbers of rank 1. Eleven parents ranked this value the top one relative to the other seven. In contrast, only one parent gave the rank of 1 to respect for self and others. Respect for self and others received mostly rankings of 2 or 3.

For this sample of Chinese American parents, less emphasis overall was placed on the children being caring adults, making a good living, having pride in racial and cultural identity, and feeling at ease with people from all racial/ethnic backgrounds. Nevertheless, still over half of the respondents rated these four values as very important.

Parents' Own Educational Experiences, Familiarity with U.S. Schools, and Satisfaction with Child's School

Only 17% of the respondents attended elementary or secondary schools in the U.S. Half of them considered themselves to be "average" students while the other half reported "good" or "excellent" performance in U.S. schools. For those respondents who had attended schools overseas, 60% reported "good" or "excellent" performance while 34% rated themselves as "average" students, and 6% as "fair" students.

The key variable for this survey is parental familiarity with the school system in this country. When asked about their familiarity with the ways in which U.S. schools operate, approximately 11% described themselves as being "very familiar," 54% as "somewhat familiar," and 36% as "not familiar." Given the large proportion of respondents who were immigrants and who did not attend schools in this country, these figures were not surprising.

To assess parents' extent of satisfaction with their children's current school, and determine what they were looking for in a school, the researcher included one question on academic preparation and one on social development. The results indicated that the majority of parents in this sample were satisfied with the school's performance in both areas. As high as 85% of the respondents thought that the school was doing the right amount in the area of social development while 78% thought the school was doing the right amount to prepare their children academically. Clearly there were more parents dissatisfied with the school in the area of academic preparation (22%) than in the area of social development (15%). In both cases, the dissatisfaction stemmed from the school not doing enough rather than doing too much. We hypothesized that parents who rated their children as doing well might be more satisfied with the school's performance in academic preparation; however, analysis of the data did not yield any significant correlation.

Parents' Involvement with Education at Home

To determine how frequently parents engaged in certain behaviors to help foster their children's success in school, we asked a series of questions about parental activities in the home, school, and community. As Table 6 shows, over half of the parents (ranging from 54% to 69%) regularly check homework, teach good study habits, praise their children for a good report card, and ask their children about school. Combining ratings of "Regularly" and "Sometimes," we found that the four most popular parental practices were still checking homework (100% of the parents), teaching good study habits (99%), praising their children for good report cards (99%), and asking their children about school (98%). A relatively smaller proportion of parents read to their children or assign extra homework.

Table 6: Frequency of Activities in the Home (N=69)

	1	2	3	4
ACTIVITIES:	Regularly	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Teach good study skills	69%	30%	1%	0%
Check homework	66%	34%	0%	0%
Praise for good report card	61%	38%	1%	0%
Ask about school	54%	44%	3%	0%
Monitor TV watching	44%	40%	1%	0%
Child reads to parents	30%	58%	10%	1%
Read to child	15%	48%	31%	6%
Assign extra homework	15%	47%	25%	13%

These parents resembled the Pattern III (tenuously secure, limitedly acculturated, outsider) parents discussed earlier in our report in that there was a heavy emphasis on developing good study skills, checking, and monitoring. Given the prevalence of assigning extra homework among Pattern III parents in the ethnographic study, the infrequency of this practice among the parents in the survey is unexpected.

Parents' Involvement with Education in the School

Table 7 shows the distribution of responses to questions about parents' involvement with the school. Only 11% of the parents said they have regularly or sometimes volunteered in the school or served on parents' councils. The percentage of parents who said they have never done so is high — 60%.

By far the most common parental practice to keep connected with the school was reading school notices — 97% of the parents said they did so either regularly or sometimes. Meeting with the teacher to talk about the child (53% did this either regularly or sometimes) and attending performances or celebrations (36% of the parents did so either regularly or sometimes) were the next two most common practices. In contrast, complaining to the teacher or school was very rare.

Table 7: Frequency of Activities in the School (N=57)

	1	2	3	4
ACTIVITIES:	Regularly	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Read school notices	85%	12%	3%	0%
Meet with teacher	16%	37%	42%	5%
Attend performances	7%	29%	50%	14%
Complain to school	5%	2%	16%	77%
Volunteer/parents' council	4%	7%	32%	58%
Attend group meetings	2%	35%	47%	16%
Phone contacts with teachers	2%	11%	35%	53%

Parents' Involvement with Education in the Community

A third dimension in parental practices relates to the use of community resources. Parents were asked to rate the frequency with which they engaged in community activities that could serve to expand their children's horizons, enlarge their children's social circles, and enhance learning.

Table 8: Frequency of Activities in the Community (N=60)

	1	2	3	4
ACTIVITIES:	Regularly	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Chinese, music, art lessons	44%	19%	11%	26%
After-school care	43%	13%	15%	30%
Library/museum	16%	48%	28%	8%
Travel	15%	38%	32%	15%
Religious	3%	5%	24%	67%

The activities were presented as mutually exclusive categories. For example the child may participate in a field trip to the museum as part of the after-school care program, but the category "library/museum" refers to the parents themselves taking the child to visit a library or museum. Although a child may attend a Chinese class sponsored by the church or temple, the category "religious" refers to religious activities in a place of worship. As shown in Table 8, less than half of the parents regularly made use of after-school care programs or took advantage of a variety of classes offered in the community. Between 53% and 63% of the parents used all but one of the resources listed on the survey at least sometimes. The exception was religious activities, which were used by a very small number of families.

What Accounted for the Differences? A Correlational Analysis

From an analysis of our ethnographic data on ten Chinese American families, it becomes clear that there are distinct patterns of involvement with children's education among Chinese American families. These patterns may be a function of the parents' place of birth, length of stay in this country, perception of their status in the United States, their degree of acculturation, proficiency in English, proficiency in Chinese, and/or the extent of familiarity they have with the U.S. school system. The brevity of the present questionnaire would not permit us to examine all these dimensions. We focus, therefore, on whether familiarity with the U.S. school system affected parents' views and practices; thus parents' familiarity with U.S. schools became the key independent variable in this survey. Although only one question in the survey instrument directly addressed parents' familiarity with U.S. schools, a high degree of correlation (all significant at the .01 level) was found between familiarity with U.S. schools and each of the following five variables: (1) parents' education level; (2) parents' self-rating of their ability as a student; (3) language in which questionnaire was filled out; (4) primary home language; and (5) whether parents attended U.S. schools. In particular, a t-test revealed an extremely strong relationship ($p<.000$) between parents' familiarity with U.S. schools and parents' having attended U.S. schools. These five variables, therefore, were also included in the correlational analysis using the Pearson test.

The dependent variables were (1) parents' hopes for the their children; (2) parents' values; (3) parents' involvement with their children's learning at home; (4) parents' involvement in the school; (5) parents' involvement in the community; and (6) parents' perception of their children's school performance.

Factors Affecting Parental Hopes and Values

In order to assess which factors affected parental hopes and values, we combined the hopes and values questions on Page 1 of the survey instrument and developed the following three scales:

Scale 1. Hopes and values around academics and career success
Scale 2. Hopes and values around social development and personal happiness
Scale 3. Hopes and values around racial/cultural socialization

It should be noted that the three scales were highly correlated with one another ($p<.01$). None of the independent variables was found to be correlated with parents' academic hopes and values for their children. All parents apparently placed high value on academics and career success. However, a high correlation existed between the language spoken at home and Scale 2 ($r=.29$, $p<.01$) and Scale 3 ($r=.32$, $p<.01$). English-speaking parents were more likely than Chinese-speaking parents to value the social development and personal happiness of their children, thus lending some support to our findings from the ethnographic study about Pattern I "highly secure, highly acculurated, insider" parents. Likewise, the English-speaking parents were more likely than Chinese-speaking parents to rate cultural/racial socialization as an important value. A plausible explanation is that the former could not take for granted that their children would naturally have a strong connection to their cultural heritage and racial identity. These parents felt more of a need to highlight cultural/racial socialization.

Factors Affecting Parents' Activities in the Home

Using four items (checking homework, assigning extra homework, teaching good study habits, and monitoring TV) from Question 18 in the survey instrument, a composite scale called "Home Activities" was formed. These four items were chosen because they reflected concern around academics and involved monitoring behavior on the parents' part. No significant correlations between this dependent variable and the independent variables were found.

We also sought answers to the following questions: Which parents were more likely to assign extra homework? To read to their children? To have their children read to them? None of the correlations found between assigning extra homework and any of the independent variables reached the level of significance or .05 or better. However, those parents who were more familiar with U.S. schools ($r=.33$, $p<.01$), who were better educated ($r=.37$, $p<.01$), who spoke English at home ($r=.31$, $p<.05$), and who used English to fill out the questionnaire ($r=.24$, $P<.05$) were more likely to read to their children. A significant negative correlation ($r=-.29$, $p<.05$) was found between parents' self-reported school performance and whether

their children read to them. Parents who rated their own school performance as only "average" or "fair" were more likely to be read to by their children.

We had theorized that assigning extra homework was prompted by the parents' concern about their children's school performance. No significant correlations, however, were found between parents' assigning homework and their rating of their children's school achievement.

Factors Affecting Parents' Activities in School

A composite scale called "Involvement with School" was constructed from six of the seven items under Question 19 of the survey instrument. The item "read notices from school" was not used due to a lack of variation in the responses. We found that those parents who were more familiar with U.S. schools ($r=.46$, $p<.01$), had higher levels of education ($r=.38$, $p<.01$), and spoke English as the primary language at home ($r=.53$, $p<.01$) were more likely to be actively involved with the teachers and the school; they volunteered in school, attended performances and group meetings, met with the teacher, made telephone contacts with the teacher, and complained to school personnel more frequently.

We were particularly interested in assessing which parents were more likely to volunteer in school or serve on a parents' council. The result was not surprising: families in which English was the primary language were more likely to have parents who volunteered in school.

Factors Affecting Parents' Activities in the Community

An "Involvement with Community" scale was constructed using all five items from Question 20 on the survey instrument. Only one independent variable was found to correlate significantly ($r=.34$, $p<.01$) with this scale: those parents who filled out the questionnaire in English were more likely to make use of community resources that provide enrichment opportunities to their children.

Factors Affecting Parents' Perception of Their Children's School Performance

The children's school performance (as perceived by their parents) bore a significant relationship to the parents' familiarity with U.S. schools ($r=.34$, $p<.01$), the parents' level of education ($r=.34$, $p<.01$), the language used to fill out the questionnaire ($r=.47$, $p<.01$), and the primary home language ($r=.24$, $p<.05$). Those parents who were familiar with U.S.

schools, had higher levels of education, used English to fill out the questionnaire, and spoke English in the home were more likely to rate their children as doing better in school. Again it should be stressed that the children were not necessarily doing well in school, but that the parents perceived the children to be doing well.

Discussion of the Findings and Summary

In general, most but not all of the findings from this survey parallel those from other studies on Chinese American families as well as those from our ethnographic study. There were, however, a few surprises. We will discuss the major findings from the survey and compare them to what is found in current literature on Chinese Americans.

In the area of hopes for children in school, two of the items most frequently mentioned were getting good grades and learning to read, write, and do arithmetic. These findings are consistent with those from past studies. (See the literature review by Siu, 1992). What was not expected, though, was that "enjoying learning in school" was overwhelmingly the number one hope for the parents in this survey. An emphasis on children's enjoyment of learning had not been identified in previous studies.

In the area of values, parents' emphasis on the child being obedient and well-behaved was not surprising, given what we know about Chinese American parents, particularly immigrant parents (Siu, 1992). What was unforeseen, however, was the high degree of importance attached to children's having respect for self and others, followed by children's being happy. These two values are seldom recognized in prior research studies on Chinese American parents. The high percentage (over 90%) of parents attaching great importance to a college education is significant, and expected, but it ranked slightly lower than the personal qualities that parents thought their children should possess. Although the three remaining values — being a caring adult, having cultural/racial pride, and feeling at ease with people from different backgrounds — were still considered important by the majority of respondents, the percentages were smaller for these than for the other values. One possible explanation is that many respondents might have considered the item "having respect for self and others" to be all-encompassing. They might have felt that if you have respect for yourself, you will feel proud of your heritage and if you have respect for others, you will be a caring adult and get along with people from different backgrounds.

Data from our ethnographic study suggest that developing bicultural competency in their children is on the minds of Chinese American parents (Siu, 1994). Immigrant or American-born, Chinese American parents realize the importance of preparing their children to get along with people of all races and feel comfortable in a multicultural society. This

finding was confirmed by the survey: over three-quarters of the parents considered "being at ease with people from all racial/ethnic backgrounds" to be important or very important.

The fact that most of the parents were satisfied with the job their school was doing, in both academic preparation and social development, is a tribute to the school in which this survey was conducted. In other studies reviewed by Hidalgo, Bright, Siu, Swap, & Epstein (1995), Chinese American parents reported much dissatisfaction with schools, citing concerns about lax discipline, insufficient homework, and poor mathematics training.

Research studies have identified a variety of ways in which Chinese American families attempt to support children's school performance. These include reducing the number of household chores for children, purchasing workbooks, establishing study times, scheduling children's free time, taking children to the library, teaching "the three Rs" before children enter kindergarten, enrolling children in language schools and music classes on weekends, assisting them with homework, and creating additional homework for them. These findings were by and large confirmed by the results of this survey. Assigning extra homework, however, was not mentioned in this survey sample as frequently as we had thought it would be. The conclusion from this sample that children read to their parents more often than parents read to their children is consistent with findings from other research studies. Because the survey sample was heavily immigrant, the infrequency of parents' reading to their children might have stemmed from the parents' lack of confidence in their English pronunciation, coupled with the belief that reading only from English books would be of help to their children. The Pattern III parents in our ethnographic study also exhibited the tendency to encourage reading by the child rather than reading to the child.

Chinese American parents are not known to complain to school personnel or to have a heavy presence in the school. (See review of literature by Hidalgo, Bright, Siu, Swap, & Epstein, 1995.) Results from this survey revealed the same pattern. Hardly any parent reported having complained to the principal or to a teacher. A very small percentage of the parents said they volunteered in the school, served on parents' councils, or attended group meetings for parents; more than half of the parents reported that they seldom or never met with the teacher. Given the immigrant status of the majority of the respondents and the prevalence of Chinese as the primary language in the home, one may assume that language barriers could explain the lack of strong connections with the school or teacher.

Since the children in our sample were mostly enrolled in bilingual classrooms where all the teachers could communicate with the parents in Chinese — and since the school also had a separate bilingual program parents' council in which business was conducted in Chinese — we can assume that factors other than language barriers might have played a part in parents' lack of participation. These could include work schedules or beliefs about the proper

role of parents in the school. The school might want to evaluate the effectiveness of its past and current outreach efforts to parents with children in the bilingual program.

We originally set out to answer the question, "Do those Chinese parents who are familiar with the U.S. school system hold values and pursue strategies that are significantly different from those of parents who are less familiar with the U.S. educational system?" The analysis of our research brings us to many conclusions. Familiarity with U.S. schools was found to affect three behaviors: Parents who were familiar with U.S. schools were more likely to rate their children as doing well in school, to read to their children at home, and to be more actively involved with the teacher and school.

As mentioned earlier, it is not easy to separate the influence of parental familiarity with U.S. schools from that of other factors pertaining to the parents, such as their attendance in U.S. primary and secondary schools, proficiency in English, level of education achieved, and their performance as a student. The general pattern of findings from our survey shows that those parents who received their earlier education in U.S. schools, spoke English at home, used English to fill out the questionnaire, and did well as a student seemed to approach their children's education differently. The key finding is that these parents were more likely to value their children's social development and personal happiness, to attach more importance to cultural/racial socialization, to serve as volunteers in school, and to make use of community resources to enrich their children's learning. Shoho's study (1992) of Japanese American parents demonstrated that the more acculturated the parents were, the more directly and actively involved they were in the schools. Data from the survey and the ethnographic study point to a similar pattern for Chinese American parents.

PART III: CONCLUSION

The Next Step in Research

Both the ethnographic study and the survey suffer from methodological limitations. Only ten Chinese American families in the Boston area were studied. Although the ten families were not homogeneous with regard to socioeconomic, educational, and urban/suburban backgrounds, there was no family in the sample that was receiving public assistance or living in dire poverty. Nor was there a single-parent family. It is possible that more than three patterns of involvement with education could be identified had these types of families been included in the sample. The survey was conducted only in one school in Boston, with the sample heavily skewed toward immigrant parents with children in bilingual classes. The focus of both the ethnographic study and the survey was on families with young children, kindergarten through first grade. Thus, the findings could not be generalized to all Chinese American families, let alone families from other ethnic and racial backgrounds. The instrument used in the survey can be improved in many ways, for example, by adding an open-ended question about hopes and values not listed, finding a clearer way to explain the ranking of items, including questions on length of stay, immigration status, and educational level of both parents. To keep the instrument short, we made no attempt to determine the parents' perception of their status or of the opportunity available in the United States, or their views on the relative roles of effort and innate ability in school success. This severely limited our ability to test some key hypotheses from the ethnographic study.

In light of the flaws of our studies, all the hypotheses that have either emerged or been supported by either or both studies need to be tested with Chinese American families in other locales, those with children in higher grades, as well as with families of other ethnic/racial backgrounds. The following are examples of some lines of inquiry that can be pursued by researchers.

Do Pattern I, II, and III parents represent generational differences? What kind of parents would the children of Pattern I, II, and III be? What will their patterns of involvement with education be like? What kind of childrearing strategies will be pursued? In the wake of the recent highly anti-immigrant climate and increased racial divisions in the United States, will U.S.-born Chinese American parents develop more insecurity around their status in this country and see less opportunity to succeed? How might this influence the way they approach their children's education, career choice, and racial socialization? What are the effects of multiple languages spoken at home on school achievement? What are the effects of early introduction to racism and discrimination on a child's self-esteem and motivation to achieve? Is Chinese immigrant parents' preference for informal sources of information found in other immigrant groups?

Another question raised by our data that needs further exploration by researchers is the relative influence of various reference groups — extended family, Chinatown, friends from mainstream society, neighbors, colleagues — on family practices and beliefs with regard to education. Such a study can use a snowball sampling technique to identify families who are members of the same social network. Comparisons can be made of families within the same network as well as those from another network.

Our research findings highlight the complexity of parental values, hopes, and behaviors among Chinese American parents. When viewing Chinese Americans, educators and mental health professionals sometimes assume that if parents expect their children to be obedient and well-behaved, monitor homework closely, and/or emphasize good grades, their children will be unhappy or their social development will be neglected. In reality, these values are not mutually exclusive, and many parents can, and do, embrace a combination of these values. Likewise, behaviors are not mutually exclusive. While exerting excessive academic pressure on children can certainly be harmful, many Chinese American parents today are aware of the emotional needs of the children and balance these needs with other values. Our ethnographic study of ten families clearly shows this awareness. The high ranking given to "enjoying learning in school" by Chinese American parents should serve as encouragement to teachers. This represents common ground between what the parents and teachers want to see in the children — a common goal that can promote home-school partnership. The fact that such a large proportion of parents in our survey rated "respect for self and others" as very important was an interesting and telling sign — one that merits more attention in the future from researchers who study Chinese American families.

Ogbu (1983) makes valuable contributions to the understanding of the educational achievement of various minority groups by making a distinction between "voluntary" and "involuntary" minorities. He attributes the educational success of Chinese American children to the sojourner identity of Chinese immigrants. This theory is useful in shedding light on the educational achievement of Chinese American children of an earlier era. In America today, however (1) not all Chinese Americans are immigrants, (2) there is diversity within the immigrant group, and (3) the sojourner mentality is no longer prevalent among Chinese American immigrants.

It is clear from our research over the last three years that Chinese American parents cannot be characterized as a monolithic group with similar educational views and practices. Not only are there U.S.-born Chinese American parents, but there are also Chinese immigrant parents who have attended schools in this country, adopted English as the primary language in the home, and become very familiar with the educational system here. They are, in fact, in a position to aid newer immigrant parents in learning to navigate the school system and utilize community resources. There is thus a crying need for school personnel and researchers to look beyond immigrant status, which alone cannot tell us much about a parent or family.

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APPENDICES

A. Demographic information on the ten Chinese American families in the ethnographic study, July, 1993

B. Demographic information on the survey sample, Spring, 1995

C. Cover letter from principal to parents/guardians (English version)

D. Cover letter from principal to parents/guardians (Chinese version)

E. Cover letter from researcher to parent/guardians (English version)

F. Cover letter from researcher to parent/guardians (Chinese version)

G. Family Questionnaire (English version)

H. Family Questionnaire (Chinese version)

Appendix A

Chinese American Sample
Demographic Information
July, 1993

Child							Parents			Grandparents in the home		
Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Date of Birth	Place of Birth	# of Siblings	Ordinal Position	School	Marital Status	Income Level	Education Level	Gender	Place of Birth	Years in U.S.
Aaron Lam	M	9/15/86	N.E. City	1	2	Urban	M	Yes*	3			
Ivan Chan	M	3/9/86	N.E. City	0	1	Urban	M	No	3	F	China	1.5
Paul Lee	M	12/31/85	N.E. City	1	2	Urban	M	No	3			
Julie Ho	F	9/24/86	N.E. City	1	2	Urban	M	No	5			
James Ma	M	3/19/86	N.E. City	0	1	Urban	M	No	5			
Lori Kao	F	3/11/87	U.S.	0	1	Suburban	M	No	5	F & M	China	Visits
Megan Hung	F	11/23/87	N.E. City	3	3	Suburban	M	No	4			
Stacy Yee	F	7/8/87	N.E. City	2	1	Urban**	M	Yes	2			
Tim Woo	M	4/3/87	N.E. City	2	3	Urban	M	No	5			
Dennis Yuen	M	3/21/87	N.E. City	1	1	Suburban	M	No	5			

Key: Parental Education Level

Level 5 = Both parents have graduated from college or more
Level 4 = One parent finished college, the other didn't or both parents have had some college
Level 3 = Both parents graduated from high school
Level 2 = One paretn graduated from high school
Level 1 = Neither parent finished high school

* (Income Level) Child is/is not eligible for free or reduced lunch in school
** Changed to a suburban school in September, 1993

(Continued)

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Chinese American Sample
Demographic Information (Continued)
July, 1993

	Father					Mother						
Name (pseudonym)	**Age**	**Place of Birth**	**U.S. Citizen**	**Years in U.S.**	**Education**	**Age**	**Place of Birth**	**U.S. Citizen**	**Years in U.S.**	**Education**	**# of Adults at Home**	**Primary Language in Home**
Aaron Lam	46	China	No	20	High School	40	Portuguese Colony, Macao	Yes	17	High School	2	Chinese (Cantonese)
Ivan Chan	41	China	Yes	13	High School	36	China	Yes	9	High School & Some College	3	Chinese (Cantonese)
Paul Lee	50	China	Yes	30	High School	45	China	Yes	13	High School	2	Chinese (Cantonese)
Julie Ho	40s	N.E. City, U.S.A.	Yes	40+	J.D.	40s	Hong Kong	Yes	Approx. 30	College Graduate	2	English
James Ma	39	Hong Kong	Yes	21	College Graduate	37	Hong Kong	Yes	21	College Graduate	2	English & Chinese (Cantonese)
Lori Kao	35	China	No	8	Ph.D.	36	China	No	8	Ph.D.	2 (Sometimes 4)	Chinese (Mandarin)
Megan Hung	30s	Hong Kong	Yes	27	College Graduate	30s	China	Yes	18	High School & Some College	2	Chinese (Cantonese & Toisanese)
Stacy Yee	41	China	No	13	6th Grade	32	China	Yes	6	High School	3	English
Tim Woo	45	N.E. City, U.S.A.	Yes	45	M.B.A.	45	S.W. City, U.S.A.	Yes	45	M.A.	2	English
Dennis Yuen	35	N.E. City, U.S.A.	Yes	35	M.D.	32	N.E. City, U.S.A.	Yes	32	1 Year Graduate School	2	English

Appendix B

Demographic Data on the Survey Sample

Total sample size = 87

Cases with missing information on a particular item were excluded when computing the percentage.

Decimals in percentages have been rounded off. Due to rounding off, the total percentage may sometimes add up to slightly more or less than 100.

Grade level of child in Spring, 1995:

Kindergarten	25	29%
First grade	30	35%
Second grade	32	37%

Type of classroom:

Bilingual	67	77%
Regular monolingual	20	23%

Language of completed questionnaire:

Chinese only	67	77%
English only	15	17%
In both languages	5	6%

Person filling out the questionnaire

Mother	60	71%
Father	22	26%
Both parents	3	4%
No response	2	

Child's gender:

Male	45	54%
Female	39	46%
No response	3	

Child's place of birth:

U.S.A.	76	88%
Other (China/Hong	10	12%
No response	1	

Child's school achievement in current school year (1994-1995):

Honor roll	7	8%
Very well	11	13%
Good	39	47%
Average	21	25%
Fair	5	6%
Poor	0	
No response	4	

Number of languages used in the home:		
Monolingual (Eng. only)	1	1%
Monolingual (one Ch.		
More than one dialect or		
No response	1	
Primary home language:		
English	10	12%
Chinese (any dialect)	74	86%
Vietnamese	1	1%
Both Eng. and Chinese	1	1%
No response	1	
Secondary home language:		
English	48	56%
Chinese (any dialect)	19	22%
No secondary language	17	20%
Both Eng. and Chinese	2	2%
No response	1	
Is English mentioned as either a primary or secondary language:		
Yes	61	71%
No	25	29%
No response	1	
Family composition:		
Spouse/partner present	66	82%
No spouse/partner	15	19%
No response	6	
Presence of other adults:		
No other adults	68	84%
Grandparents	9	11%
Unspecified adults	4	5%
No response	6	
Number of children in family:		
One	7	10%
Two	32	45%
Three	16	23%
Four	13	
More than 4	3	4%
No response	16	

Average age of children:		
4	2	4%
5	5	9%
6	10	18%
7	6	11%
8	12	21%
9	14	25%
10	4	7%
11	1	2%
14	1	2%
15	1	2%
17	1	2%
No response	30	
Parent's place of birth:		
U.S.A.	6	7%
China	58	67%
Hong Kong	14	16%
Vietnam	7	8%
Malaysia	1	1%
Burma	1	1%
Father's employment:		
Full-time	59	86%
Part-time	4	6%
Not employed	6	9%
No response	18	
Mother's employment:		
Full-time	42	56%
Part-time	12	16%
Not employed	21	28%
No response	12	
Highest level of education in household:		
Less than high school	18	23%
High school graduate	30	39%
GED	1	1%
Vocational	9	12%
Some college	6	8%
2-year college graduate	2	3%
4-year college graduate	10	13%
Graduate education	2	3%
No response	9	

Whether parent attended schools in the U.S.:

Yes	14	17%
No	68	83%
No response	5	

Self-reported school performance of those parents who attended U.S. schools:

Excellent	3	21%
Good	4	29%
Average	7	50%

Self-reported school performance of those parents who attended schools overseas:

Excellent	10	15%
Good	29	45%
Average	22	42%
Fair	4	8%

Appendix C

Cover letter from principal to parents/guardians

(English Version)

May 19,1995

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The enclosed letter and questionnaire are being sent to you by Dr. Sau-Fong Siu, a professor at Wheelock College, Boston. This is a college that has had a close relationship with our school. We use a number of their students every year as student-teachers in our classrooms.

The Boston Public School Central Administration and I myself have given Dr. Siu permission to conduct a research study about families and education. It is important to learn more about how Chinese parents work in partnership with the school to help children do better. Therefore, I encourage you to fill out the questionnaire and return it to your child's teacher within this week. Participation in this study is, of course, entirely voluntary.

Sincerely yours,

Principal

Appendix D

Cover letter from principal to parents/guardians

(Chinese Version)

親愛的家長或監護人：

附上的信和問卷是由波士頓衛洛學院副教授蘇黃秀芳博士發出的。衛洛學院與本校有很密切的關係。每年都有來自該學院的學生在本校作實習老師。

波士頓公立學校的中央行政部門及本人已准許蘇博士進行這項有關家庭及教育的研究計劃。華人家長如何與學校合作是一個重要的課題。因此我鼓勵閣下回答這問卷和在本星期內交回給貴子女的老師。然而，參與這項研究計劃全是屬於自願的。

校長

謹啓

一九九五年五月二十二日

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Appendix E

May 22, 1995

Dear xx School Parent:

On behalf of the Wheelock College Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning and the U.S. Department of Education, I am writing to invite you to take part in a research project. It will take no more than 15 minutes of your time. We would like to find out how parents from different cultures support their young children's success in school. We hope you will participate because the information you give about your views and practices will be very useful to teachers and other families.

If you would like to be a part of this effort, please fill out the enclosed survey questionnaire, seal it in the attached envelope, and send it to the school with your child by this Thursday. Every child who returns the questionnaire will get a small gift from us through the teacher. In addition, the Center on Families will award a $100 gift certificate for books to the xx School library.

The questionnaire is two pages long, and is color-coded for grade in school. (We are sending questionnaires to a sample of kindergarten, first grade, and second grade classes.) It is an anonymous questionnaire, so please do not put any names. Either the child's father, mother, or guardian may fill out the questionnaire. If you have more than one child in school you need to fill out only one. For your other child in school, you simply write "Already filled out for another child" on the questionnaire and put in the envelope. This way, all of your children will receive our gifts.

Please be assured that any information you give us will be kept confidential. The survey forms will not be read by your child's teacher or other school personnel. After we have analyzed the information, we will give a summary of the findings to Mr. xx, the Principal. You are welcome to read that summary, which should be ready in October, 1995.

If you have any questions about this research project please feel free to call me at home, 891-5828. Thank you for your help with this study.

Sincerely yours,

Sau-Fong Siu, D.S.W.
Associate Professor and Director of Social Work Program
Acting Director of Center on Families

Appendix F

CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

WHEELOCK COLLEGE 45 PILGRIM ROAD BOSTON, MA 02215 617-734-5200 FAX 617-566-7369

親愛的　　學校家長：

謹代表衛洛學院的家庭研究中心和美國聯邦教育局邀請閣下參與一項研究計劃，所需時間不會超過十五分鐘。我們希望知道來自不同文化的家長如何支持他們年幼的子女在學校取得好成績。我們希望你能參與，讓老師及其他家庭多明瞭華人家長的觀點與經歷。

若你願意參與，請將附上的調查問卷填妥放入附上的信封內並封口，於本星期五之前讓貴子女帶回學校。我們會贈予一份細小的禮物給每位交回問卷的學生。同時，家庭研究中心將會贈送一百元禮券給　　學校圖書館購買書籍。

問卷共兩頁，不同級別是不同顏色的，（問卷會以抽樣調查的方式派發給幼稚園、一年級和二年級學生）。這是一個不記名的問卷，所以請不要填寫你的名字，只要是學童的父親，母親，或監護人便可填寫這問卷。若你有超過一名子女在　　學校就讀，你只需填一份問卷，但你要在其他子女的問卷上寫上"已填過一份問卷"，然後放入信封內交回。這樣，你所有的子女都會收到禮物。

我們保証你所給的一切資料將會絕對保密，貴子女的老師或學校的其他職員將不會看到問卷提供的答案。在分析資料後，我們會給一份調查結果予　校長。這份報告應在一九九五年十月完成，歡迎你向　校長取閱。

若你對這研究計劃有問題的話，請致電891-5828與我聯絡。多謝你協助這研究。

社會工作系系主任及副教授
家庭研究中心署理主任
蕭黃秀芳博士
謹啓

一九九五年五月二十二日

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Appendix G

Wheelock Family Questionnaire

Please fill out this questionnaire for your child. Person filling out this questionnaire:

Mother ____ Father ____ Other (please specify) _____

1. My child is: Male ____ Female ____ Date of birth _____

2. I would identify my child as:

African American ___ Asian American (specify) _____ Latino (specify)_____
Native American ____ Pacific Islander _____ White _____
Other (specify) _____

3. Where was your child born? (What country?) _____

4. What languages are spoken in your home?

Language spoken most often is : _____ 2nd languages is: _____

5. Who lives in your household? Check all that apply:

Self _____ Partner/spouse _____ Other adults (specify) _____

Children _____ How many? _____ Children's ages _____

6. Are you (or your partner/spouse) currently employed?

SELF: Work full-time ___ Work part-time ___ Not presently employed ___
SPOUSE: Work full-time ___ Work part-time ___ Not presently employed ___

7. How is your child doing in school this year?

Honor roll __ Very well __ Good __ Average __ Fair __ Poor __

8. What is the highest grade completed by you or your partner/spouse?

___ less than high school
___ high school graduate
___ GED
___ vocational training
___ some college
___ 2-year college graduate
___ 4-year college graduate
___ graduate education

9. Here are some hopes that parents have for their children in school. Think about what is important to you for your child. For each of the following, write the number 1 for VERY IMPORTANT, 2 for IMPORTANT, 3 for SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT, or 4 for NOT IMPORTANT.

___ enjoying learning in school
___ thinking creatively and trying new activities
___ getting along well with teacher and other children
___ learning to read, write, and do arithmetic
___ getting good grades or an excellent report card

10. Here are some family values for children. For each of the following, write the number 1 for VERY IMPORTANT, 2 for IMPORTANT, 3 for SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT, or 4 for NOT IMPORTANT.

___ being a happy child
___ being an obedient/well-behaved child
___ having respect for self and others
___ going to college
___ making a good living as an adult
___ becoming a caring adult
___ feeling proud of our racial and cultural identity
___ being at ease with people from all racial/ethnic backgrounds

11. In what country were you born? _____

12. Did you attend elementary, junior high or high school in the U.S.?
___ Yes For which grades? _____
___ No

13. In general, what kind of a student were you in the U.S.?
___ Excellent ___ Good ___ Average ___ Fair ___ Poor
___ I never attended school in the U.S.

14. In general, what kind of a student were you in another country?
___ Excellent ___ Good ___ Average ___ Fair ___ Poor
___ I never attended school in the U.S.

15. How familiar are you with U.S. schools and how they work?
___ Very familiar ___ Somewhat familiar ___ Not familiar

16. In academic preparation, is your child's current school doing
___ Too much ___ Just right ___ Not enough

17. In social development, is your child's current school doing
___ Too much ___ Just right ___ Not enough

For questions 18, 19, and 20, please put a number beside each item.

1 = REGULARLY 2 = SOMETIMES 3 = SELDOM 4 = NEVER

18. HOME: This past year how often do you:
____ Check child's homework
____ Read to child
____ have child read to you
____ Assign extra homework
____ Teach good study habits
____ Monitor TV viewing (amount and type of program)
____ Praise or reward child for a good report card

19. SCHOOL: This past year how often do you:
____ Volunteer in school or serve on parents' council
____ Attend performances and holiday celebrations
____ Meet with the teacher to talk about child
____ Have phone conversations with the teacher
____ Complain to the teacher/principal/other school personnel
____ Read notices from school

20. COMMUNITY: This past year how often do you
____ Enroll child in afterschool care
____ Take child to lessons in Chinese, music, dance, etc.
____ Take child to the library or museum
____ Travel (with child) outside of Massachusetts
____ Attend (with child) religious activities in church/temples

PLEASE ASK YOUR CHILD TO GIVE THIS BACK TO THE TEACHER. THANK YOU!

Appendix H

家庭研究中心問卷

請回答這問卷，回答者是學童的：母親___ 父親___ 其他(請註明)_____

1. 我的子女是 男___ 女___ 出生日期_____

2. 我子女的種族是：_____

3. 你的子女在何處出生？(那一個國家？)_____

4. 在家說何種語言？ 最常說的語言是：_____ 第二語言是：_____

5. 誰住在你的家裡？請在所有適合之答案上劃上✓號：

自己___ 配偶/伴侶___ 其他成年人(請註明)_____
兒童___ 幾多個？___ 兒童的年紀_____

6. 你(或你的配偶/伴侶)現在是否受僱？

自己： 全時間工作___ 部份時間工作___ 現沒有工作___
配偶： 全時間工作___ 部份時間工作___ 現沒有工作___

7. 你子女今年在校的成績如何？

優等(Honor Roll)___ 非常好___ 良好___ 中等___ 中下___ 劣等___

8. 你或你的伴侶/配偶的學歷是：

___ 未完成高中
___ 高中畢業
___ 與高中同等學歷文憑(GED)
___ 職業訓練
___ 選修過大學課程
___ 兩年大學畢業
___ 四年大學畢業
___ 研究院

9. 以下是一些父母對子女在學校的期望，請細想那些對你的子女最重要，請在以下每一項填上1、2、3或4，1代表*極之重要*，2代表*頗為重要*，3代表*略為重要*，4代表*不重要*。

___ 熱愛學習，喜歡上學
___ 思想有創意和嘗試新的活動
___ 與老師及同學合得來
___ 掌握閱讀、書寫，和數學
___ 獲得好分數或極佳的成績

10. 以下是家長對教養子女的一些價值觀，請在以下每一項填上1、2、3或4，1代表*極之重要*，2代表*頗為重要*，3代表*略為重要*，4代表*不重要*。

___ 做一個快樂的孩子
___ 做一個聽話的孩子
___ 尊重自己及別人
___ 讀大學
___ 長大後豐衣足食
___ 做一位關懷別人的成年人
___ 以自己是中國人為榮
___ 可以與不同種族及文化背景的人相處

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11. 你在那一國家出生？_____

12. 你曾否在美國讀小學、初中或高中？
___ 有　那一班級？_____　　___ 沒有

13. 一般而言，你在美國讀書時是一個怎樣的學生？
___ 優等　___ 良好　___ 中等　___ 中下　___ 劣等　___ 從未在美國讀書

14. 一般而言，你在其他國家讀書時是一個怎樣的學生？
___ 優等　___ 良好　___ 中等　___ 中下　___ 劣等　___ 從未在其他國家讀書

15. 你對美國的學校的制度和運作有多熟悉？
___ 非常熟悉　___有點熟悉　___不熟悉

16. 在傳授知識方面，你子女現在的學校是否做得
___ 太多　___ 剛好　___ 不足

17. 在群體生活方面，你子女現在的學校是否做得
___ 太多　___ 剛好　___ 不足

請在18,19,和20題的每一項填上1、2、3或4:
1 = 經常　2 = 有時　3 = 很少　4 = 從不

18. 家庭: 在過去一年，你是否

___ 查閱子女的家課
___ 經常讀書給子女聽
___ 聆聽子女讀書
___ 分派額外的功課給子女
___ 詢問子女關於學校的事情
___ 教導子女良好的學習習慣
___ 監管你子女觀看電視(節目的類別和次數)
___ 若子女有好成績，會讚賞及獎勵他們

19. 學校: 在過去一年，你是否

___ 在學校當義工或在學校家長委員會事務
___ 出席學校舉辦的音樂會、節日慶祝會等
___ 出席家長會的各項活動
___ 與老師個別會談
___ 利用電話與老師交談
___ 向老師/校長/其他學校教職員投訴
___ 看學校派回來的通告

20. 課餘活動: 在過去一年，你是否

___ 讓子女參加課餘活動班
___ 讓子女學習中文、音樂、舞蹈等
___ 帶子女前往圖書館或博物館
___ 帶子女到屬省以外的地方旅行
___ 帶子女出席教會/廟宇的宗教活動

請於填妥後放入信封內並讓貴子女交回其老師，謝謝！

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